

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN ANCIENT HISTORY

The Popes and the Church of Rome in Late Antiquity

John Moorhead



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In the past few decades there has been an explosion of interest in the period of late antiquity. Rather than being viewed within a paradigm of the fall of the Roman Empire, these centuries have come to be seen as a time of immense creativity and significance in western history. *The Popes and the Church of Rome in Late Antiquity* places the history of the papacy in a broader context, by comparing Rome with other major sees to show how it differed from these, evaluating developments beyond Rome which created openings for the extension of papal authority.

Closer to home, the book considers the ability of the Roman church to gain access to wealth, retain it in difficult times, and disburse it in ways that enhanced its authority. John Moorhead evaluates patterns in the recruitment of popes and what these suggest about the background of those who came to papal office. Structured around a narrative of the church's history from the accession of Leo the Great to the death of Zacharias II, the book does more than tell what happened between these years, applying new approaches in intellectual, cultural, and social history to provide a uniquely deep and holistic study of the period.

John Moorhead is Professor Emeritus at the University of Queensland, Australia. He is author of *Gregory the Great* (Routledge, 2005).

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This book is for Lynn
confidit in ea cor viri sui
And for the people I see on Friday nights
pretiosissimum divitiarum genus est, amicos inveni

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List of Abbreviations

<i>ACO</i>	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i>
<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>
<i>CLA</i>	<i>Codices Latinae Antiquiores</i>
<i>Cod theod</i>	<i>Theodosiani libri XVI ed. Th. Mommsen, Berlin 1905</i>
<i>FMSt</i>	<i>Frühmittelalterlichen Studien</i>
<i>ICUR ns</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae nova series</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Liber Pontificalis</i>
<i>LPR</i>	<i>Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis</i>
<i>MEFR</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>AA</i>	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>Poet</i>	<i>Poetae</i>
<i>SRM</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>SRLI</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Langobardorum et Italicarum</i>
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PLS</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina Supplementum</i>
<i>SChr</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
<i>SCIAM</i>	<i>Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo</i>

Introduction

Many people will pick up this book in the expectation of reading a narrative that lays out the achievements of a series of popes. This I have attempted to provide, so that the book can be seen as representing an approach to the history of the Christian church that goes back to Eusebius in the fourth century. But I have increasingly become aware of the limitations of this method. One is obvious: There are a number of themes, some of them likely to be of particular interest to various readers of this study, that would lose all coherence were the pieces of evidence we have for them to be scattered among accounts of various popes, and it has seemed sensible to pull them together into sections where the issues are discussed in their own right. This had enabled the book to say more on the wider life of the church of Rome, and by implication society at large, than most accounts of this subject, and I hope that readers whose concerns may be far removed from the normal subject matter of ecclesiastical history will find things of interest. Another issue cuts more deeply. No-one can work on the history of the church of Rome without becoming aware of the differing bodies of evidence for various periods; put simply, there are some popes of whom we know a good deal, among whom Gregory I is outstanding, whereas others are little more than names. Hence, whereas a narrative that proceeds from pope to pope is an attractive way of structuring the material, the weighting it gives to various popes will inevitably be misleading, for it will reflect what we happen to know about them as well as their relative significance. I have tried in various ways to compensate for this, but any narrative must reflect the kind of evidence that is available.

Work for this study has been carried out in different locations, and sometimes the significance of a text was not apparent at the time I had access to it. This has been annoying, for the book is based on a dialogue with sources that are frequently refractory and have sometimes been read against the grain. Historians of late antiquity are less inclined than they used to be to take their sources at face value, and those we have for the church of Rome, even those that were not the products of controversies, often reflect a particular point of view. They should therefore be seen not as simple quarries of factual data but also as evidence for the agendas of those who produced them. Some readers of this book may think it has too much on the source material; however, I fear

that some parts of the narrative which summarize the account of a particular source may have made it complicit with whatever agenda its author may have had.

Throughout, I have tried to write the history of a Christian community in late antiquity, and so been concerned with the way in which it functioned as well as the interactions of its leaders with secular powers. For preference I have lingered over areas that show a bishop involved in the life of his city, or the internal workings of the church. My treatment is not defined by the interactions of popes with political figures, and pays less attention to their relations with western rulers than some accounts do; yet, as their dealings with emperors often related to correct doctrine, it has seemed important to provide greater detail concerning these. Some readers will be surprised, as I have been more than once, at the degree of continuity across the period. Nevertheless, it was also a time of change, and attempting to pinpoint the nature and precise time of important developments has been fascinating.

On the one hand, I do not use the word ‘papacy’, for it inevitably suggests an institution more developed than that which existed in late antiquity; people who are comfortable with the word will lose nothing from its absence here. Similarly, I have made sparing use of the word ‘papal’. On the other hand, I refer to all bishops of Rome as popes. This is not to say that the earlier ones necessarily held the same view of their office as later ones, but as it would have been invidious deciding when to start using the title it has seemed best to use it throughout. I refer to senior bishops of other churches by such titles as ‘patriarchs’, or simply as ‘bishops’, as has seemed natural in specific cases, while being attentive to ways in which such usage could be controversial.

All references to the letters of Gregory I accord with the enumeration in the MGH edition. The form in which references to the *Liber Pontificalis* are given will allow them to be checked in the editions of both Duchesne, which I have chiefly used, and Mommsen, whose presentation allows textual variants to be more clearly spotted, as well as the most helpful translation of Davis.

I am grateful beyond words to the Australian Research Council, for a grant that enabled work on this book to begin, and to Lauren Verity, without whose gentle persistence it may never have ended.

John Moorhead
Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 2014

The Church in the World

Surrounded as they were by physical reminders of its glorious past, pride in their city came naturally to the people who lived in Rome during late antiquity. Yet such a feeling was tempered by nostalgia, for whereas it was believed in the sixth century that someone who climbed the Capitol would see the works of human skill overcome, it was clear that the city's best days were behind it. Construction of the monumental buildings that so impress visitors to Rome to this day came to a halt. In the fourth century officials were told not to erect new buildings but to devote attention to restoring old ones, and anyone who did erect new buildings was prohibited from using materials pilfered from the old. Towards the middle of the fifth century an emperor responded to the problem of people recycling material from public buildings in words that capture the mood of the time: 'great things are being ruined so that small things can be repaired.' An author of the sixth century deduced from the ambit of the walls, the great bulk of the Colosseum, the size of the baths, and the large number of mills, that the population of Rome had once been much greater than it was in his time.¹ And whereas most cities in the western part of the Empire were failing to hold their own during late antiquity, the decision of the emperor Constantine to establish a new city on the Bosphorus, Constantinople, as a second capital early in the fourth century, and military needs that increasingly took emperors, and the political power that accompanied them, away from Rome, meant that decline was experienced with particular intensity there. Humiliatingly, the city that had once seen itself as the head of the world was briefly occupied by hostile armies twice during the fifth century.

In 410 a force led by Goths entered the city and sacked it over three days, lighting fires that made people think of those that had engulfed Troy when it was captured by the Greeks. Among other things, the assailants helped themselves to some of the easily portable wealth that was located within the churches of the city. In the following decades attempts were made to

compensate for the losses. Pope Celestine (422–432) responded to the fire that Goths had caused by presenting a church that another pope had erected a century earlier in the area of Trastevere, across the river from the main city, with items, many of them made of silver, to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist, as well as fittings to hold lamps and candles. At the request of Celestine's successor, pope Sixtus (432–440), the emperor Valentinian replaced a silver canopy that Constantine had installed in the cathedral, the old one having been taken away by people described as barbarians; significantly, the new one contained less silver than the old. Such acts were part of a process of recovery that advanced slowly, for it took years for the government to organise the repair of walls, towers, and gates.² Damage of a more serious kind was to follow, when in 455 a force of Vandals, led by their king Geiseric, made the short crossing from Africa and occupied the city for 14 days. An eyewitness described Geiseric as having subjected it to a free and untroubled examination, after which he removed all its wealth. His troops despoiled the Palace and removed half of the roof, made of bronze overlaid with gold, which covered the vast temple that had been built nearby in honour of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Treasures of the Jews that the emperor Titus had brought to Rome after the capture of Jerusalem in the first century were taken to Carthage, where they were stored among the accumulated wealth of the kings. As they had in 410, the city's churches again suffered losses so that the pope of the time, Leo I, was led to take a radical step. Among other gifts, the emperor Constantine had presented three of the great basilicas of the city, the cathedral and those dedicated to S Peter and S Paul, with two large silver jars weighing 100 lbs each. These Leo had melted down, so they could be turned into small chalices for the city's various churches. Nearly 100 years later, the disaster Geiseric had visited upon the Romans was well remembered, and the city from which he set sail on his return to Africa was one in which morale had fallen dangerously low. But in the midst of all too evident signs of the city's decline, one group within it was experiencing rapid growth.³

Whatever reasons had prompted the emperor Constantine to become a supporter of the Christian church early in the fourth century, his unexpected decision turned out to be the most important single event in the history of that body. A faith that had made steady, but by no means spectacular, advances since a representative of the Roman state had handed its founder over to be crucified, and had suffered spasmodic and well-remembered bouts of persecution, suddenly found itself the recipient of official backing that would accelerate across the century until, by its end, the sacrifices and worship in temples that had formed the most public parts of the Empire's religious life in preceding centuries had been declared illegal. More of the traditional beliefs survived than our sources for the period suggest, but the adoption of

Christianity by the rulers of the Empire was one of the most important events in the history of the West. Nowhere was its impact more apparent than in the ancient capital of the Empire, for although the city saw little of Constantine, he undertook there a massive campaign to erect buildings worthy of the religion he had adopted.

Chief among the churches for which Constantine was responsible was that at which the bishop of the city would normally officiate, the cathedral, which was built on a commanding site on the Caelian Hill, not far from the Aurelian walls. Appropriately enough for the city's main church it was dedicated to Christ, although in later times it was called the Constantinian basilica after its founder, and later still the Lateran, after the family whose palace had formerly stood on the site; in the tenth century it was dedicated to S John the Baptist, from whence its modern name, S John Lateran, came. Generously proportioned, being approximately 98 m long and 56 m wide, it provided a headquarters for the bishop on a scale that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier. Not far away, within a complex known as the Sessorian Palace, Constantine built the church now known as Sta Croce in Gerusalemme, which he is said to have presented with a relic of the Cross sealed in a casket of gold and jewels. We only read of this gift in a source written in the sixth century, and as the cult of the cross can only be documented in Italy from late in the fourth century, we may doubt whether the story is true. However, devotion to the cross would be a lasting theme in the devotional life of the church in Rome; centuries later, the author of an account of pope Eusebius, who briefly held office during the year 308, saw the discovery of the cross as important enough to justify the inclusion of the apparently irrelevant information that it had been discovered on 3 May. Other churches were built in honour of the various martyrs who had been put to death by people acting on behalf of Constantine's predecessors, at the places where they were believed to have met their ends outside the walls of the city. A large basilica dedicated to S Peter, 123m long and 66m wide, was erected in an area on the right bank of the Tiber known as the Vatican, in a massive operation that involved the levelling of part of a hill, and a smaller building in honour of S Paul, constructed on the Via Ostia. S Laurence was honoured by a basilica erected on the Via Tiburtina, whereas a basilica in honour of a pair of saints whose fame has not endured as well, Marcellinus and Peter, was constructed near the catacombs where their remains were thought to lie. To the buildings erected by Constantine was added a basilica that his daughter Constantia built on the Via Nomentana and paid for out of her own resources, fittingly dedicated to a female martyr, Agnes. The patronage of the state, rather than any initiative on the part of the pope of the time, Silvester, had been responsible for these works; as an inscription on the triumphal arch of S Peter's boasted to Christ, 'Constantine

the victor founded this hall for you.' The emperor endowed each church with property that would generate ongoing income, and equipment to be used in the liturgical ceremonies that would take place inside them. The scale of most of these buildings allowed them to accommodate throngs of worshippers, many more than would be the case today, for people then stood throughout services. The ample dimensions of the churches were put to good use when people sheltered in them during the sack of 410, in connection with which they were described as being extremely large. The sudden reconfiguration of the skyline of Rome, at a time of limited public building, must have astonished the inhabitants of the city.⁴

Modern visitors to Rome take for granted the pre-eminence of S Peter's among the basilicas of the city, and it was certainly larger than the cathedral, but Constantine's perspective was different. Nearly half of the income from the endowments he provided the churches with went to the Lateran and the baptistery that was adjacent to it; thereafter, in descending order, came the basilicas of S Paul, SS Marcellinus and Peter, and S Peter. By and large the popes had had little to do with S Peter's, which was a considerable distance from the Lateran and thought of at the end of the century as being a haunt of drunken people remote from the concerns of the bishop. Donations made by pope Hilary to various churches in the second half of the fifth century suggests how their relative importance was viewed at that time: the Lateran and its baptistery were treated the most generously, and thereafter the basilicas of S Laurence, S Peter, and S Paul, in that order. The prominence of the basilica of S Laurence may answer to the growth that his cult was experiencing during that period, but Constantine had endowed the church poorly and with properties in its immediate neighbourhood, and Hilary may have seen himself as correcting an oversight. During this period the popes, like Constantine, invested S Peter's with less importance than might have been expected.⁵

Yet a powerful current was running that would undermine the central place of the cathedral, for the personal connection people felt with the martyrs was pulling against it. Today we unthinkingly refer to the basilica erected in honour of Peter as 'S Peter's', but the terminology of our chief source for Constantine's undertakings describes him building not S Peter's basilica but a basilica for S Peter, and it uses similar language for churches dedicated to other saints. In the same way, it describes later rulers as making donations to S Peter. Such language conveys a sense of someone doing something on behalf of another person, perhaps one who was admired and whose goodwill was being sought. A bishop well experienced in the ways of rulers commented that kings had become suppliants and martyrs patrons, thereby inverting the customary relations between rulers and those they dealt with. So it was that, when the emperor Honorius entered Rome in triumph early in the fifth century, he was

described as choosing to kneel at the memorial of the fisherman rather than the temple of the emperor, as the nearby mausoleum, now known as the Castel Sant'Angelo, that had been built for the emperor Hadrian in the second century was referred to. When Augustine enquired in a sermon as to whether an emperor visiting Rome first went to the tomb of Peter or the nearby temple of Hadrian, he did not feel it necessary to answer the question, whereas in the distant East John Chrysostom knew that emperors, consuls, and generals visited the tombs of the fisherman and the tentmaker, as he referred to Peter and Paul respectively. The practice of emperors was later imitated by kings who tried to present themselves in an imperial guise, so that when the Gothic king Theoderic visited Rome in 500, his first act was to visit S Peter's, and the tradition was also observed by king Totila after he captured the city in 546.⁶

Not surprisingly, emperors and members of their families wanted to be buried in close proximity to the remains of the martyrs. In Constantinople, emperors wished to be buried at the church of the Holy Apostles so they would not be separated from the remains of those who were thought to be the gatekeepers of heaven and the sovereigns of Christian society. In Rome, Constantine's mother Helena was believed to have been buried in a mausoleum adjacent to the church of SS Marcellinus and Peter, and his daughter Constantia was laid to rest near the church she had built for the virgin martyr Agnes. They, and doubtless other, less well-known members of the laity, were using the martyrs in a way that made sense to them, and we may see here signs of a distinctive lay piety that could be practised with some degree of independence from the clergy. It does not follow from this that the basilicas erected in honour of Peter and the other martyrs were separate from the liturgical life of the city, for the gifts that Constantine made to S Peter's indicate that he expected the Eucharist to be celebrated there, and indeed late in the fourth century it was the only church in Rome where mass was celebrated on Christmas Day. Whereas popes later came to celebrate the sacrament in other churches on Christmas Day, it seems to have been taken for granted that Charlemagne would have gone to S Peter's when he went to church on that day in 800. But lists of the priests serving in Rome that identify the church in which each one served fail to mention any as being attached to S Peter's or the other great churches built in honour of the martyrs, which makes it likely that, for all its grandeur, the basilica lacked a clerical establishment that would have allowed the Eucharist to be celebrated regularly in it, and as we shall see special arrangements had to be made for priests to be present at the major basilicas of the martyrs to conduct baptisms.⁷

The structures that Constantine so generously bestowed on the church were oddly located. Most of them were outside the walls of the city, necessarily so, given that Roman law forbade the bringing of bodies, such as the remains of

the martyrs near which they had been erected, into a city. This consideration did not apply to the cathedral, but it too had a marginal location. Perhaps the emperor wished to avoid giving offence to the non-Christians who still dominated the city, although it is possible that practical issues such as the availability of building sites and the density of population were responsible for the decision to build it in an out-of-the-way place near the walls. Whatever the reason may have been, it would take a long while for churches to penetrate into the monumental core of the city.⁸ But the distribution of the basilicas bore no relation to that of the city's population, and this lack of fit between the ecclesiastical infrastructure and the need of the members of the church for accessible places where they could worship was largely met by a network of 25 churches that were established by wealthy citizens, although if we accept a suggestion that they were distributed in accordance with a deliberate plan the bishop may have been involved in their establishment. Called 'titular' churches after the title deeds that legally secured their ownership, they fell under the control of the bishop and were staffed by priests and their assistants, acolytes and readers, whom he had ordained. Indeed, one of the most important responsibilities of a bishop was to ordain priests, deacons, and the subordinate ranks of clergy, a function that popes usually exercised during December, although from the late fifth century we hear of ordinations taking place early in the year as well. Records of the men who were ordained were kept, from which we know the number of priests and deacons ordained by each pope in late antiquity. The provision of liturgical and pastoral ministry in the titular churches gave them an identity corresponding to that of modern parish churches, and whereas it is difficult to penetrate to this level of the church's organisation the priests who were responsible for their operations must have enjoyed a degree of autonomy in carrying out their tasks. Whereas we necessarily speak of 'the church' of Rome, it was by no means a monolithic body, for as it grew it became sufficiently large and multifaceted to contain elements whose interests could sometimes diverge.⁹

The relationship of the church to the secular culture of the Empire in which it grew up was complex. A very learned German encyclopaedia is entitled 'The Ancient World and Christianity',¹⁰ but it would be possible to distinguish the two categories too sharply, for in many ways the church operated happily within the structures of the ancient world, easily and doubtless unthinkingly adopting for its own purposes elements of that world that were ideologically neutral, not having been contaminated by association with competing beliefs. Indeed, we shall later encounter cases where it is impossible to tell whether the church borrowed from the surrounding society, or vice versa. One of these areas was architecture. The layout of the churches designed by Constantine's architects corresponded to that of the buildings that had been known since the

period of the early Roman republic as basilicas. Today we automatically associate buildings in this style with Christian places of worship, but this is not how they would have appeared in late antiquity. As its Greek name implied, a basilica, consisting of a rectangular hall known as a nave, often with aisles to either side, at one end of which was a semi-circular extension known as an apse, had originally been a public, or indeed 'royal', building that was used for secular purposes. The design was found appropriate for worship by Jews, such as those who remodelled a basilica to turn it into a large synagogue at Sardis in Asia Minor during the fourth century, no less than Christians. But an emperor who built large buildings of a kind often associated with the government was making a statement. The building campaign Constantine engaged in clearly marked the stage when the church visibly became a prominent part of the city, but the way he chose to mark it in Rome was one traditionally associated with emperors, for the erection of large public buildings had long been a way by which a Roman ruler demonstrated his beneficence. Whereas his undertaking was specifically Christian, Constantine was discharging a traditional function of an emperor.

After the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire, people had to grapple with an issue that had suddenly emerged and would be ongoing; that of how the church and what was now officially a Christian state fitted together. Earlier stances were cast aside; the pleas Christians had made for religious tolerance when they constituted a precarious minority were replaced by the persecution of non-Christians and those who were regarded as deviate Christians. An African bishop of the fourth century believed that the state was not within the church, but the church was inside the state, namely the Roman Empire; an Italian bishop of the same period, however, asserted that the emperor was inside the church, not above the church.¹¹ Many people, particularly in the East, such as the great historian Eusebius of Caesarea, saw the existence of the Empire as providential, and held that it had played a part in the history of salvation, for it could not have been accidental that it had come into being at the time Christ was born. People in the Byzantine Empire would be comfortable with a close association of church and state, and tended to think that the institutions and practices of the latter reflected the will of God. But the most influential thinker of the western church suggested something very different. Augustine of Hippo thought of the world as having been divided into two cities, a city of God characterised by love of God taken to the point of contempt of self, and an earthly city characterised by love of self taken to the contempt of God. 'While this heavenly city is on pilgrimage in the world, she calls out citizens from all nations and so collects a society of aliens, speaking all languages. She takes no account of any difference in customs, laws and institutions, by which earthly

peace is achieved and preserved.’¹² Whereas the critique Augustine mounted of non-Christian Rome could scarcely be taken seriously, based as it was on what he read in Varro and Sallust, authors of the late republic who presented a view that could charitably be thought of as being somewhat out of date by the fifth century, his message was straightforward: There was no need for ‘dismay when earthly kingdoms passed away.’¹³ The doctrine was well suited to the time, for this was the very period when Roman power was yielding to that of Germanic rulers over the western two-thirds of the Empire. Tensions between the different views of history and the place of the state in the world that came automatically to emperors in Constantinople and to those who inclined to an Augustinian view would be ongoing.

Another inheritance from ancient thinking would also be influential. Christians assumed, as those who had preceded them had, that correct belief would be rewarded by supernatural powers. It had been to guard against the wrath of the gods that pre-Christian emperors had persecuted the martyrs, and the sack of Rome in 410, coming as it did not long after Theodosius I had forbidden the traditional sacrifices, allowed adherents of the old religion to subject Christianity to withering criticism: The bodies of Peter, Paul, and Laurence were lying in Rome, yet the city was in a wretched state. Augustine wrote his *City of God* to refute the charge that the adoption of a new religion had caused the sack of Rome, although his aim may have been to sustain the wavering faith of Christians rather than to persuade non-believers. When he wrote about 100 years later, the non-Christian historian of antiquity, Zosimos, chose to end his narrative with the disaster of 410. But Zosimos, whose work survives in a single manuscript, was on the losing side. Christians took it for granted that the Empire would profit were correct doctrine adhered to. Unfortunately, as early as the time of Constantine, the church was troubled by the internal disputes over doctrine that would cause it more trouble than those who slaughtered the martyrs had, so it became necessary to determine which beliefs would assure the goodwill of God. Ambrose brought one of the books of his work on the faith he wrote for the emperor Gratian to a climax by pointing out that military success was connected to proper faith; pope Leo informed the emperor Marcian that, when God had been made favourable by a proper confession of faith, both the fallacies of heretics and the enmity of barbarians had been destroyed. On becoming patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius had offered Theodosius II a deal: If the emperor helped him destroy heretics, Nestorius would help the other defeat the Persians. But before the year was out Nestorius had himself been deposed for heresy, and a correlation between correct belief and the welfare of the state was often hard to detect. Nevertheless, the need to ensure that the church adhered to the proper teaching that would cause God to look upon the Empire with favour would cause

anxiety among emperors as well as popes.¹⁴

Such worries were far from the minds of the people of Rome, who took to Christianity with enthusiasm. It seems to have been widely adopted within the city during the second half of the fourth century. Christian leaders delighted in pointing out how its religious life had changed. Jerome describes the capitol, overlaid with gold, having come to lie in filth, and all the temples being covered with soot and spiders' webs. The city had moved away from its old haunts, and waves of people ran past the half-ruined shrines on their way to the places where the martyrs were buried. Augustine rhetorically asked whether anyone could show the temple of Romulus being held in as much honour as he could show the shrine of the apostle Peter. Within three generations of the conversion of Constantine a persecuted minority had become a mass movement in which, to judge by the descriptions of Jerome and Augustine, the cult of the city's martyrs played a central role. No longer was the church a small community of believers who met privately once a week to share the Eucharist. Even before the number of believers began to grow rapidly, Constantine presented the cathedral with vessels to hold the wine needed for the sacrament that have been estimated to have had a capacity of some 50 to 150 litres, and the size of the chalice the empress Theodora was shown carrying in a mosaic in the church of S Vitale in Ravenna towards the middle of the sixth century similarly suggests that many people were taking communion. By the middle of the fifth century so many people were going to the churches on important feast days that they could not all fit in, so that a pope was forced to advise a bishop of Alexandria to deviate from traditional practice and permit the Eucharist to be celebrated more than once on the same day.¹⁵

Inevitably, the figure who stood at the head of such a large group became central to the life of the city. Bishops, who in earlier times had often been forced to define themselves against the surrounding world, now expressed views that sometimes simply reflected those of the society in which they found themselves. An inscription in the church of Sta Maria Maggiore recorded its having been given by pope Sixtus II (432–440) to the common people of God. The word used for these people was a familiar one in Roman history, for the *plebs* were the ordinary citizens of the city, who were distinguished from the high-born patricians. The word was not particularly common in late antiquity, so occurrences of it may be significant. In the *Liber Pontificalis*, a text that records the doings of each pope, it tends to be used at exciting points in the narrative: The *plebs* were the only laypeople mentioned among those who reinstated a pope who had been threatened with deposition, they were described in a letter sent to an empress as having experienced bad treatment from another pope, whose successor in turn had to satisfy the whole people

and *plebs* that he had done nothing evil against his predecessor. There is a hint here of dealings between popes and elements in the city other than those our sources generally mention that it will be worth investigating later. But when bishops thought of their relationship with their people, one image persistently came to mind. The epitaphs of popes frequently refer to their flock or flocks. It was widely believed that the Christian people could be seen as a flock of sheep, and the presence of these animals in mosaics placed in the churches of Rome at the time, from the lamb associated with S Agnes to the rows of sheep depicted in mosaics in the churches of S Prassede or SS Cosmas and Damian, is inescapable. There was ample biblical precedent for such an understanding, for David had been a shepherd before becoming king, and Christ described himself as the good shepherd. It proved easy for this image of authority to be transferred to the church's bishops, in particular that of Rome, for he was seen as the successor of the apostle whom Christ commanded to feed his sheep (John 21: 15–17). The image was doubtless more conducive to the dignity of the shepherd than that of the sheep. But there were other ways of understanding the role of a bishop.¹⁶

The Church's Leaders

A pre-existing model was to hand for one of the central functions of those who exercised leadership within the church, for the responsibility of bishops to teach corresponded to that of the teachers of philosophy who were prominent in the ancient world. Philosophers taught while seated in a chair, and the words used for the chair of a philosopher in both Greek and Latin were also used for the formal chair in which a bishop sat as he delivered instruction by way of homilies or sermons. Some of the bishops' chairs of late antiquity can still be seen, such as the wonderfully decorated one made out of ivory that was sent from the east to bishop Maximianus of Ravenna towards the middle of the sixth century, and that which pope Gregory I was believed to have occupied a few decades later. Such a chair was a crucial marker of the identity of a bishop, so that when a deposed patriarch of Constantinople arrived in Rome during the seventh century the pope demonstrated his belief that he was still the rightful occupant of the office by making a special chair available to him. Moreover, the style in which bishops taught resembled that which philosophers had adopted. According to Aphrodisias of Alexandria, a Greek philosopher and commentator on Aristotle who flourished around 200 AD, whereas in ancient times people used to discuss theses, classes were now devoted to commenting

on books. Although we do not know what brought about this change in pedagogical technique, the new manner of teaching was similar to that adopted by bishops who commented on passages of the Bible that had just been read out in their sermons, which stayed far closer to the biblical text than those of many modern preachers do; indeed, the basic expository tools bishops used to make sense of the Bible were those scholars were already employing in their commentaries on standard texts. Moreover, philosophers in the ancient world were more concerned than those of medieval and modern times with how to lead a good life, so their concerns overlapped with those of a religion that was very interested in moral questions. And just as the teachings of a philosophical school were transmitted by a sequence of leaders who were known as successors, so the teachings of the church were passed down through what was thought of as an apostolic succession. The author of *The Life of Proclus*, a great Neoplatonic philosopher of the fifth century, believed that he could demonstrate a succession of teachers from the time of Plato. The way in which the doctrine of a school of philosophy could be passed down through a chain of successors was known to Christians, and whereas their system differed from that of the philosophers, among whom the leader of a school would generally choose the man who would succeed him, the general idea was easily transferred to the leaders of the church, so that when Eusebius wrote early in the fourth century he opened his work stating that he would tell of the successions from the Holy Apostles, and organised his material around the lines of succession in various churches that extended from the apostles to his own day. We shall later return to these issues with precise relevance to the church of Rome, but it is worth observing that the relationship between a bishop and a towering predecessor could be thought of, not in terms of inheritance of jurisdiction, but of teaching authority.¹⁷

Another important function exercised by bishops, that of presiding over the administration of the sacraments, was more specific to Christianity. People were initiated into the church through the sacrament of baptism, and Rome was one of the many cities in which a baptistery, a special building with something resembling a small swimming pool in the middle, was erected adjacent to the cathedral, within which the bishop would preside over the baptisms that traditional practice dictated were to be held once a year, during the night before Easter. Such buildings were seen as fundamental to the work of the church, that in Rome having been erected as early as the time of Constantine, and for a building that was destined to be rarely used its furnishings were spectacular. The emperor ensured that baptisms would be celebrated in style by placing in the middle of the baptistery that formed part of the Lateran complex a porphyry column supporting a basin made of gold that held a golden candlestick weighing 52 lbs, in which 200 lbs of balsam were

burned during the period in which Easter was celebrated. As time passed such buildings became less important, for as more people became Christians baptisms became predominantly confined to infants, and a notion of original sin that seemed to make the baptism of the newly born a matter of urgency was becoming stronger, causing a demand for baptisms to become available more often. A stage in this process occurred towards the end of the fifth century, when pope Simplicius arranged to have priests attend the basilicas of S Peter, S Paul, and S Laurence once a week for the sake of baptism and the reconciliation of penitents. By the early sixth century it was believed that a pope prior to Constantine had established the 25 titular churches for the sake of baptism and administering repentance to the many pagans who were being converted. This story was a simple projection backwards of a situation that had come about much later, in which baptism was generally administered by priests in the titular churches. Nevertheless, the ability of a pope to preside over the Easter baptisms remained symbolically powerful.¹⁸

Presiding at the sacrament of the Eucharist was another important task carried out by bishops. The shape of a basilica was well suited to this, for at the end opposite to the entry stood the apse, at the front of which, in a position which allowed it to be seen from anywhere within the building, an altar table was placed. It is not as clear as has sometimes been assumed whether the bishop faced the people or had his back turned to them as he celebrated mass, but by the seventh century it was assumed that the pope would face the east as he prayed in church. From an early time the right to celebrate the Eucharist on behalf of the bishop had been delegated to priests, but a custom that seems to have been unique to the Roman church preserved their unity with the bishop as they did this. Pope Miltiades, who held office early in the fourth century, was later credited with having introduced a practice whereby a portion of the Eucharistic host consecrated by the pope was distributed to the various churches, and pope Siricius, towards the end of the century, with ordering that no priest was to say his weekly mass before he had received his portion of it. By the early fifth century a formal process had emerged. After the pope had consecrated the host during his own mass, acolytes carried pieces of it in linen bags to the priests of the titular churches within the city, and when the priests came to say mass they would pop a piece into the chalice, so that the people would not feel that they were separated from communion with the pope. Within a few centuries the cumbersome practice had disappeared, but for as long as it lasted it gave powerful expression to an old belief that every Eucharist was in some sense that of a bishop. As time passed the bishops of Rome increasingly had to act as the managing directors of a large and sometimes ill-coordinated organisation, carrying out functions of a less religious nature than teaching and administering the sacraments. But these

remained central to their activities.¹⁹

These functions, which popes carried out within Rome, were ones they shared with all other bishops. But they formed the innermost of three concentric circles of papal activity, beyond which lay two zones of wider responsibility. The first of these involved oversight of what were known as the suburbicarian churches, literally the churches ‘under the city’, which were located in the part of Italy that lay south of a line extending roughly from the Gulf of Genoa to Ancona, as well as Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, a block of territory that corresponded to an administrative unit the emperor Diocletian had created. In their capacity as ‘metropolitans’, the bishops of Milan, Aquileia, and Ravenna came to discharge similar functions in different regions of northern Italy. The council of Nicaea had this responsibility in mind when, in 325, it compared the power the bishop of Alexandria exercised over a particular area with a similar power enjoyed by the bishop of Rome, for early Latin versions of the relevant canon make it clear that it was understood to refer to the care of the bishop of Rome for the suburbicarian places. Later, some people interpreted the canon differently, so that, according to the Latin version of the proceedings of a council held in Chalcedon that was produced in the middle of the sixth century by Rusticus, a deacon of the Roman church, a representative of that church had drawn the council’s attention to the sixth canon of Nicaea, in the form ‘the Roman church has always had the primacy.’ Just as the pope ordained priests and deacons for the church of Rome, so he ordained bishops for the suburbicarian churches, although these ordinations, unlike those of priests and deacons, could take place at any time of the year. The situation in Sardinia was different, for the pope only ordained the bishop of Cagliari, who was responsible for other ordinations.²⁰

Popes kept a watchful eye over the suburbicarian bishops, who were expected to attend synods held in Rome twice a year, although it proved difficult for the bishops of Sicily to make the journey. Just over half of the surviving letters written by pope Gregory I, which number some 860, were sent to people in the suburbicarian lands. Energetic popes would appoint men they thought suitable to vacant dioceses there. Gregory I was prone to appoint monks from the monastery in which he had formerly lived as bishops, perhaps unkindly, as he experienced the job of being a bishop as a heavy burden. Such appointments allowed popes to raise the quality of the episcopate, exercise patronage, and extend their influence. A letter that Leo I despatched not long after he became pope that was addressed to all the bishops located in Campania, Picenum, Tuscany, and all the provinces provides a good example of a pope’s dealing with the suburbicarian bishops. It largely dealt with matters concerning the clergy. The ordination of slaves and other non-free people, and of men who had married widows or been married more than once,

was forbidden. Neither clergy nor laity were to lend money at interest, and clergy were not to do so in the name of other people. Bishops who offended against these ordinances were to be deposed, and Leo insisted that the ordinances that earlier popes had issued were to be observed. The language of the concluding section is unmistakably legal, for Leo described the ordinances of earlier popes in terms which emperors of the period used for the laws they issued. He clearly saw his letter as part of an ongoing process of legislation by the bishops of Rome, and it was duly preserved in collections of canon law. But whereas the location of the bishops to whom the letter was sent is imprecisely expressed, they seem to have been the bishops of the suburbicarian churches, and Leo's legislation to have been issued in response to issues that had arisen in the part of Italy for which he saw himself as having particular responsibility.²¹

But the concerns of the popes did not end with the suburbicarian churches, for they had a much wider area of responsibility. This, it was believed, originated in their relationship with the apostle Peter.

Peter

The most prominent among the followers of Jesus was Simon Peter. The Gospels represent him as having more to do with Christ than his other disciples, and when they are listed his name invariably comes first.²² He emerges as the leader among Christ's followers in the account the Acts of the Apostles gives of the period after Pentecost, and in one of his early letters Paul names Peter (Cephas) first among those who saw Christ after his resurrection, mentioning him separately from the 12.²³ On the figure of Peter who emerges from the Bible other layers could be imposed. Apocryphal Acts of Peter were available in Latin. In Rome it was believed that Peter had become sick when he denied Christ,²⁴ and exciting stories were told of his contest with the magician Simon Magus. But however people thought of the historical Peter, he was considered central to the church, for, as Ambrose put it, the church was where Peter was.²⁵ From an early date, Peter was specifically associated with the foundation of the church of Rome, and whereas the Acts of the Apostles does not credit him with travelling to the city, as it does Paul, a letter written in the name of Peter that sends greetings from 'she who is in Babylon' (1 Pet 5: 13), a placename almost certainly meant to denote Rome, makes the tradition that he went there plausible. According to Irenaeus, who wrote in the second half of the second century, the church in Rome was founded by Peter and Paul.

Having built it up, Irenaeus believed that they entrusted Linus with the office of bishop, in which he was succeeded by Anacletus, and then Clement. Eusebius thought that Linus had been appointed bishop in Rome after Paul and Peter had been martyred; the order in which the two apostles are listed may reflect the order in which they were believed to have been put to death by Nero, but is sufficiently unexpected to cause one modern translation to transpose them. As Eusebius understood it, Linus was succeeded by Anacletus, and he by Clement. But as time passed Paul gradually became sidelined. He certainly remained a venerated figure, and John Chrysostom thought of Peter and Paul as the two shining eyes of Rome. The basilica that emperors ordered to be built over his tomb in 383 was larger than that Constantine had built for Peter, but in future Paul would be thought of not as the co-founder of the Roman church but as a theologian, and the fruit of a serious reading of his epistles by Augustine in the last decade of the fourth century that suggested the primacy of grace over free will would prove decisive for Western theology. For his part, Peter began to be thought of as having been a bishop, although it was not clear just how he would have become one; according to one suggestion, he had been ordained by the other apostles. Rufinus, a historian of the church who wrote towards the end of the fourth century, believed that Peter instituted Clement to succeed him in his office of apostle, and Linus and Cletus to be bishops. By the early sixth century, it was believed in Rome that Peter, having come there from Antioch, where he had already been exercising the ministry of a bishop, ordained Linus and Cletus to act as bishops, so that he would be free to pray and preach. He also consecrated Clement as bishop and entrusted the bishop's seat to him, as well as the power of binding and losing that Christ had conferred on him. Having mentioned these things in its account of Peter, the *Liber Pontificalis* proceeds to treat Linus, Cletus, and Clement as successive bishops, and sees the direct influence of Peter as extending as far as the fifth bishop, Anacletus, whom it states he had made a priest.²⁶

There is no reason to accept this account, implying as it does that at one stage Rome was in the highly anomalous situation of enjoying the services of four bishops at the one time. Whereas Linus and Cletus were neglected figures during the early centuries of the Roman church, the cult of Clement was strong. Indeed, after Peter he would be the best remembered among the earlier bishops. A church bearing his name was known in the fourth century, where the present church of San Clemente stands on the Caelian Hill, and there is an outside chance that it had been built on the site of the house of Clement, who was remembered as having been from the region of the Caelian. But two of the priests from this church who attended a council held in 499 identified themselves as being from the titular church of Clement, and one from that of S

Clement, which makes it more likely that the church had been named after a lay founder who was coming to be falsely identified with the pope of the same name. Clement was also involved in the production of a letter sent in the name of the Roman church at the end of the first century to the church at Corinth, which had approached it for guidance when controversies broke out among the clergy. The First Epistle of Clement, as it is now known, furnishes a good example of advice being sent to a church quite remote from Rome that had turned to it for assistance, and the letter, which follows the New Testament in a manuscript in which it has come down to us, was read out in many churches. If the letter were regarded as having a quasi-scriptural status, its authorship rather than its contents may have brought this about. Be this as it may, the account the *Liber Pontificalis* provides of the earliest years of the church of Rome is clearly concerned to connect the bishops it sees as having succeeded Peter in Rome with the apostle as strongly as it can. Specifically, it suggests that Peter passed on two things to the popes who succeeded him.²⁷

The account of Peter in the *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with not only the two epistles in the New Testament that bear his name, but also the gospel of Mark, his authorship of the latter being explained by Mark having been his hearer and his son in baptism. But Peter's role did not stop there, for he is also said to have been the source of all four gospels, because when questions were asked they were confirmed by his testimony. Whether in Greek, Hebrew, or Latin (the last two categories may have been intended to designate the gospels of Matthew and Mark, respectively), they were confirmed by his testimony. This comes close to suggesting that Peter was the source of the church's knowledge of Christ, and the account also suggests that Peter saw to it that this would be passed down within the Roman church. It represents Peter as having ordained Linus and Cletus so that he would be free to pray and preach, and to educate the people. His desire to pray and preach allows Peter's activities in Rome to be identified with those of the apostles at an early stage of the history of the church (Acts 6: 4). Subsequently, he ordained Clement bishop, and entrusted to him his chair, metaphorically his office of teaching, instructing him among other things to keep himself free for prayer and preaching to the people. Peter therefore saw to it that his ministry of teaching was transmitted to those who succeeded him in Rome. Long before the *Liber Pontificalis* was written, such an understanding had been voiced by an African bishop, Optatus, for although he placed the succeeding bishops in a different order he was certain that in Rome the chair of the bishop was first assigned to Peter. He had been the first to sit on that one chair, on which he was succeeded by Linus, Clement, and Anacletus. When the scholarly Jerome wanted a doubtful matter cleared up by a pope, he represents himself as having decided to consult the chair of Peter, an expression that suggests that the contemporary

bishop of Rome possessed the teaching authority of Peter. Such a transmission was taken for granted by Augustine, who wrote of 'the chair... of the Roman church on which Peter sat and on which Anastasius sits today.' Hence, when people spoke of the apostolic see, or chair, they credited whoever currently sat in it with having succeeded to the teaching authority of a particular apostle, Peter.²⁸

In Rome the term 'apostolic see' was therefore generally used in an unproblematic way to refer to the church of that city, although other churches that claimed to have been founded by or through an apostle also laid claim to being apostolic. Indeed, the bishops of other churches could be thought of as having a relationship with a great figure in the history of their churches that was in some ways similar to that popes were believed to have had with Peter. In the fifth century the Greek historian Sozomen listed the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria as among the occupants of apostolic thrones who were present at the council of Nicaea. He was aware that no pope attended, which he attributed to the advanced age of the pope of the time, and the persistent failure of popes to attend ecumenical councils, even one who was very near the place where such a council was held, would be noticed by more than one eastern observer. In the late sixth century the bishop of the town of Tours in Gaul described his bishopric as the chair of Martin, the most outstanding among the bishops of that town, while a poet thought of a bishop of Tours as being a worthy heir of Martin and having been placed in office by him, in accordance with his merits. Pope Gregory I feared that one candidate for the post of bishop of Milan would, if ordained, reveal himself to be an unworthy vicar of S Ambrose. But in no case were such bishops and the churches over which they presided credited with the teaching authority people attributed to the bishops and church of Rome.²⁹ Although he was in some ways a rival to the bishops of Rome, Ambrose of Milan took it for granted that for a bishop to be Catholic meant that he was in agreement with the church of Rome, and told his people that he held the creed of the Roman church.³⁰ An ability to maintain correct doctrine may have come easily to the bishops of Rome, for in the ancient world Romans were known for their generally conservative outlook, unlike the Greeks, who delighted in seeing how far ideas could be pushed. Not surprisingly, most of the heresies that emerged in the early church were of Eastern origin, and the pattern was repeated in the centuries with which we shall be concerned, during which wave after wave of teaching that emanated from the East was, when examined in Rome, found to be deficient. It was therefore possible for popes to maintain the faith simply by standing still.

The *Liber Pontificalis* credits Peter with passing on to Clement something other than the job of teaching. It quotes him as saying: 'As the power of

governing, binding and loosing was handed over to me by my Lord Jesus Christ, so I entrust it to you.' Peter is here made to allude to a dramatic encounter between himself and Christ described in Matthew's Gospel, and nowhere else. After he had identified Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God, Christ replied that his Father in heaven had revealed this to him, and that henceforth he was to be known as Peter, the Greek word for rock. It would be on this rock that Christ would build his church, against which the gates of hell would not prevail. Christ went on: 'I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt 16: 16–19). Whereas the verbs bind and loose both have clear literal meanings, they could be used metaphorically. In Latin, the first could refer to ratifying or confirming, and the second to freeing from a liability. But people were unclear just how Christ's words to Peter were to be understood. We may take three of the most highly regarded voices in the Western church. In his work 'On the Unity of the Catholic Church', Cyprian, a bishop of Carthage who would be martyred in 258, affirmed, on the basis of Christ's words, that he built his church on Peter, and that whereas all bishops possessed equal power he established a single chair that was the source and cause of the unity of the church. A few years later, however, Cyprian reworked the portion of the text in which these words occur and deleted them. The modern scholar responsible for a critical edition of the text suggests that the original version was being interpreted in Rome in a way Cyprian had not intended, and he responded to this by taking the offending words out.³¹ The scholarly priest Jerome interpreted Christ's words as meaning that the church was founded upon Peter, who had been constituted as its head.³² Not long before he died in 430, Augustine admitted that he could not decide whether the rock on which Christ founded his church was Peter, or himself, and left the correct interpretation to the judgment of his readers. But the author of the account of Peter in the *Liber Pontificalis* 100 years later would entertain no uncertainty.³³

Having first been given to Peter by Christ, the power of binding and loosing was thought of as having been passed on to subsequent popes, who chiefly exercised it by issuing rulings that were treated as laws. At a council that convened in Ephesus in 431, the Roman priest Philip pointed out that everyone knew that Peter, who had received the keys of the kingdom from Christ, was still living and exercising judgment in his successors.³⁴ Such judgment was usually juridical in nature. Just as most of the legislation enacted by emperors took the form of responses to queries on specific points made by high officials, generally in the form of letters, so were the decrees, a word that had long been used of the rulings issued by Roman magistrates and later emperors, that popes issued. The first pope known to have issued such a document was

Siricius. Responding in 385 to a request for a ruling on matters of church practice that a Spanish bishop had sent him, the pope, who described himself as drawing on the power entrusted to Peter in which he shared, gave a formal answer, just as an emperor would have, which was filed away just as though it was a secular law; in the seventh century Isidore of Seville was aware of what he described as Siricius's little decretal work. Much of the correspondence of Leo I is juridical in nature, having been written in response to requests for rulings on diverse matters. That popes issued rulings on an ad hoc basis had an important consequence: The canon law of the church that was largely founded on them, no less than the laws enacted by Roman emperors, was not based on systematic legislation, but has something of a piecemeal look.³⁵

Popes, then, saw themselves as exercising powers of teaching and of binding and loosing that had been passed down to them from Peter. We shall return to these issues more than once, but for the time being it is worth noting that when the bishops of Rome discharged the latter office they did so in a way that was modelled on the practice of emperors. Another way in which popes acted in an imperial manner was that in which they delegated authority, particularly in two regions. During the fourth century a large measure of power over civilian matters such as taxation and the administration of justice in the Roman Empire fell into the hands of officials known as praetorian prefects. By the end of the century there were four of them, of whom two exercised authority over designated areas from headquarters located at some distance from the imperial capitals, for the praetorian prefect of Illyricum was based in Thessaloniki, to which he had been relocated from the more vulnerable city of Sirmium in the north, whereas that of the Gauls was based in the southern town of Arles, having been moved there from Trier. It was in these very cities, and at about that time that the praetorian prefects took up residence in them, that popes appointed bishops who would act on their behalf and were known by a title borrowed from another, less important part of the apparatus of the Roman state, that of vicars. Pope Siricius made the bishop of Thessaloniki his vicar in Illyricum. He may have acted in response to an unprecedented intrusion into the area made by an ambitious bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who had ordained a bishop in Sirmium in 376, but it turned out to be a very astute move, for in 395 Illyricum was transferred from the authority of the emperor in the West to that of his colleague in the East. Having established a vicar there, the church of Rome now had a bridgehead in a Greek-speaking area whose political orientation would have given the bishop of Constantinople reason to believe that it should have fallen within his sphere of influence. At a slightly later time a similar vicar was established at Arles. Needless to say, the bishops of Thessaloniki and Arles sometimes found the temptation to lord it over their fellow bishops hard to resist, the latter in particular being

susceptible to this temptation, and Leo I had stern words for both of them.³⁶

The steady extension of papal power into regions sometimes far from Rome involved deals with people who saw themselves as benefitting from being allied with the Roman church, and the interactions of the authority of Rome with the agendas of people in the areas where it was exercised will be a constant theme in the following centuries, no less than the appropriation by popes of the practices of emperors. Such overt imitation can be misunderstood. We need not see any plot to take over the governance or the functions of the state, nor a desire to fashion the administration of the church in a particularly Roman way, for popes would have unthinkingly used the means of governance that were to hand in their society. Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the adoption of imperial models would have surprised those early popes who entered their office in the period immediately after it had been held by a fisherman. And whereas we know of a patriarch of Constantinople who held office across the period 552–582, with a gap of 12 years in the middle, having become a priest at the age of 30 and patriarch 10 years later,³⁷ popes remained in office for shorter periods. Indeed, their average tenure of office during late antiquity was between six and seven years. They will have taken up the post as elderly men in a society within which grey hair was respected, and an abiding awareness of their own dignity is one of the characteristics of the popes we shall examine.

The death of pope Sixtus II was followed by the ordination of his archdeacon and the man everyone expected to succeed him as pope, **Leo I (29 September 440–10 November 461)**.³⁸ He wasted little time before revealing the high view he took of the position of Rome. On 29 June each year the church commemorated what was known as the birthday of the apostles, the day on which Peter and Paul were thought to have been put to death by the emperor Nero. The first occasion on which the feast was celebrated after Leo became pope was in 441, and on that occasion he preached a sermon in which he revealed something of his thinking. He began by pointing out that, whereas the whole world celebrated these apostles, Rome did so in a special way. They were the holy fathers and true shepherds of the city, through whom it had passed from being the mother of error to a daughter of truth. The foundation for which Peter and Paul had been responsible was more fortunate than that of an earlier pair of twins who were so discordant that one had killed the other, and had brought it to a position of glory. Rome had become a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal city. Indeed, through the holy see of blessed Peter the city had become the head of the world, exercising because of divine religion an authority wider than that it had exercised by earthly domination. How appropriate it had been that, when the parts of the world were distributed among the 12 apostles, Peter, the leader of the apostolic order, was

sent to the very citadel of the Roman Empire.³⁹

Leo's language here is dense, and the significance of what he said may have escaped some of his hearers. The discordant twins he mentions without naming them were the legendary co-founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, the former of whom was notorious for having killed his brother. Their place in history was taken very seriously by the people of Rome, but according to Leo it was less significant than that of another pair, Peter and Paul, whom oddly enough a northern Italian bishop a few decades earlier had thought of as being not merely brothers but twins, a detail that would have heightened their symmetry with Romulus and Remus, although we have no reason to believe that Leo believed this. Leo thought of Peter and Paul as having jointly founded the Roman church, a point of view on the verge of becoming somewhat old fashioned at a time when the role of Paul was being downplayed, and the discord he attributed to the earlier pair may have been intended to evoke the concord that people within Rome had come to see as having existed between Peter and Paul. Made as it was during a difficult period in the history of the city, Leo's assertion that Rome had become more significant as a Christian city than it had been when it was the centre of Empire must have been experienced as morale boosting. In styling it a holy nation, a chosen people, and a priestly and royal city, the pope was reworking language believed to have been used by Peter himself in one of his letters: 'You are a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who have been purchased' (1 Pet 2: 9). These words were originally addressed to widely scattered people living in the Jewish diaspora, and their application to the inhabitants of just one city is striking; we shall encounter other instances of biblical language being applied to the people of Rome. The notion of Rome as being the head of the world was a familiar one that again recalled Romulus, for according to the historian Livy he had declared it was heaven's will that Rome would be the head of the whole earth.⁴⁰ It must be said that such views were not original to Leo, for others had come to see Rome as essentially a Christian foundation. A hymn that may have been written by Ambrose of Milan in the late fourth century sees Rome as having been founded by the blood of Peter and Paul, and we have seen Jerome comparing the places where Romulus and Peter were venerated, to the advantage of the latter.⁴¹ But the form in which Leo expressed them allowed him to offer his hearers an extraordinarily upbeat assessment of the position of Rome at a time when its outlook was not bright.

In a sermon he delivered on the same day two years later, Leo concentrated more narrowly on Peter. Again, he associated him with Rome, observing that the apostle who had been worthy of that city had been the one who was first within the group of the apostles, but on this occasion the pope was more concerned to demonstrate that he had a particular status. He began by

commenting on the incident described in Matthew's gospel in which Christ gave special powers to Peter. As Leo understood this passage, after Peter, hitherto known as Cephas, had declared that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, Christ in turn revealed his excellence by declaring that he would thereafter be called Peter, the rock, 'because you are empowered by my strength, and the things which are proper to me because of my power will be shared with you by participation.' Christ would build his church on the strength of Peter's faith. He also said he would give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, promising that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven and whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. Leo felt that, whereas the other apostles shared this power, it was Peter's in a particular way, because the figure of Peter was placed before all the rulers of the church. Turning to a passage in the Bible that described Christ commanding Peter to strengthen his brothers during a time of temptation (Luke 22: 31f, 40), Leo believed that the bravery of all the apostles was made stronger through Peter, and that the assistance of divine grace operated in such a way that the strength given to him through Christ would be conferred on the other apostles. Finally, Leo touched on words Christ spoke to Peter after his resurrection: 'Feed my sheep' (John 21: 17), making the startling observation, 'beyond any doubt he is doing this now.' And whereas Peter was praying for all people, Leo felt that he would do so to a greater extent on behalf of those who had been his pupils, among whom he was resting on a sacred bed of blessed sleep.⁴²

Hence Peter was not merely a figure of the distant past. As the unexpected lurch into the present tense in the sermon shows, he was a present reality for Leo, continuing to pray even though he seemed to be asleep. He had not forsaken the government of the church, and Leo believed that when the bishop of Rome achieved anything in a proper fashion, it was done through the works and merits of the one whose power was still living in his see. Indeed, in the humble person of Leo, Peter could be understood and honoured, and those who heard Leo preaching were to believe that it was Peter who was speaking. Leo attributed whatever was correct in his conduct to Peter's works and governance. He felt that when the church received the one who sat in the chair of Peter as though he were Peter it was an act of charity; so great was its love for its shepherd that it did not grow cold when his heir was so unworthy.⁴³

But Leo could not be unaware that the standing of the city to which Peter had been sent had lessened since his time. The political and military difficulties of the fifth century were not the only reasons for this, for other developments were under way that would threaten the standing of the bishop of Rome. The emperor whose building projects had so greatly altered its skyline had also presided over the inauguration in 330 of a new city located on the western side

of the body of water that connects the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Built on the site of an ancient Greek town, Byzantium, but named after its founder, Constantinople would be the capital of the eastern portion of the Empire, its role corresponding to that of Rome in the west. The relative status of the two cities was expressed in various ways. Texts written in the fourth century describe Constantine as wanting his new city to be a rival to Rome, or its equal; in the fifth century, people thought he had determined that the city was to be called New Rome, or Second Rome, although they may have been projecting a later development backwards.⁴⁴ Whereas Constantine would always be remembered as the founder of the city, the relocation to it of the emperor Theodosius I in 380 marked a great development in the way the city thought of itself. He built a forum in imitation of the great one for which Trajan had been responsible in Rome, and which had elicited amazement from the emperor Constantius II when he visited the city in 357. A large triumphal arch was placed on either side of the forum, and a tall column with pictures showing the emperor's victories. In the Hippodrome Theodosius placed an obelisk from Egypt, nearly 2,000 years old, with decorations that showed him and members of his family watching races there; Constantius had similarly placed an obelisk in the Circus Maximus of Rome in 359. An orator proclaimed that the cities of Romulus and Constantine were the two mother cities of the whole world, and that Theodosius would make Constantinople a second Rome.⁴⁵ And if emperors, consuls, and generals visited the tombs of the saints in Rome, emperors similarly desired to be buried in a mausoleum in Constantinople that was near the relics of the apostles Timothy, Andrew, and Luke, where they could be seen as having become the doorkeepers of the apostles.⁴⁶

Thinking along such lines had consequences for the ways in which people thought of the relative standing of the churches of the two capitals. To be sure, the church of Constantinople was a late cab off the rank, but history could be rewritten, and an anonymous work that has in modern times been falsely attributed to Gelasius of Cyzikos represented Alexander, a priest of Constantinople who later became the bishop of that church, as having subscribed to the proceedings of the council.⁴⁷ An ecumenical church council that met in Constantinople in 381, not long after Theodosius had arrived, was concerned to develop the doctrinal formulation of the council of Nicaea. But it also drew what seemed to be an obvious conclusion from a presumed parity between the cities: The bishop of Constantinople was to have a seniority of honour after the bishop of Rome, because his city was new Rome. It was an unprecedented claim, its significance scarcely softened by a translation of its canons into Latin in which Constantinople was tactfully described as a younger rather than new Rome.⁴⁸ Whereas the supreme importance of the

church of Rome was generally taken for granted, the relative ranking of the churches immediately subordinate to it was not clear. Ambrose, writing in 381 to the emperor Gratian, after mentioning the cities of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, listed the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Milan, not coincidentally the city whose bishop he was, and Constantinople. An African chronicler of the sixth century who opposed the policies of the Byzantine emperor placed the church of Constantinople last among the five most important churches, so that it followed those of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.⁴⁹ But whereas the council of Nicaea, in considering the authority a senior bishop could exercise in his region, had placed the churches of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch together, the council held in Constantinople had suddenly elevated the bishop of that city to being second in status. The development boded ill for the authority of the church of Rome.

Its response was swift. In 382 a synod of the Roman church came together, presided over by pope Damasus. It proclaimed that the Roman church possessed a primacy, having been placed before all other churches not by the ordinances of synods but by the voice of the Lord and Saviour in the gospels, quoting Christ's words to Peter. Added to this was Peter's fellowship with the apostle Paul, the two of them having died on the same day in Rome during the time of Nero. A pair of equals, they had consecrated the holy Roman church to Christ, and by their presence and a triumph worthy of veneration they placed it before all the other cities in the whole world. The chair of the apostle Peter, the Roman church, was therefore first, 'not having a spot or wrinkle or anything of this kind' (Eph 5: 27). This quotation was taken from a passage in which Paul describes Christ as taking as his bride 'a glorious church, not having a spot or wrinkle or anything of this kind, but that she should be holy and without blemish.' The apostle had in mind the entire church, rather than that of Rome, but just as occurred when Leo mulled over the passage concerning a royal priesthood, Damasus felt able to give it local application. Over the course of his life Augustine, adopting a realistic view, came to believe that the description of the church as being without spot or wrinkle did not refer to what it already was but what it was being prepared to be, and a claim to such perfection on the part of the church of Rome would turn out to be risky. Dismissing what had been decided in Constantinople during the preceding year, the Roman council stated that the second see was that of Alexandria, which had been consecrated in the name of Peter by a disciple whom he had sent there, the evangelist Mark, whereas the third see, similarly to be considered honourable because of Peter the apostle, was Antioch, where he had lived before coming to Rome. According to this view, in which the church of Constantinople seemed to have no place, the importance of the chief churches was based on their connection with Peter. Time would tell it would

But if political developments in Constantinople could threaten the position of the bishops of Rome, those in their own city could help them. In late antiquity the eternal city had seen less of its rulers than it formerly had, and during the first half of the fifth century emperors often resided in the secure haven of Ravenna, a town on the Adriatic coast. But at the beginning of 450 a definitive relocation to Rome took place. Leo had already enjoyed collaboration with senior members of the court, for during the 440s the empress Galla Placidia had played a role in major work undertaken in the basilica of S Paul, where an inscription in the mosaic on the triumphal arch proclaimed that the pious mind of Placidia rejoiced at Leo's enhancement of what her father Theodosius had done there. Valentinian had already showed his goodwill towards the church of Rome by the donation he made to the cathedral in the time of pope Sixtus, and more recently by issuing in 445 a law supporting Leo against the troublesome bishop Hilary of Arles. The law contained an explicit statement as to the first place that the apostolic see occupied in the church, although the grounds on which it justified this position were, in part, disquieting, for it supplied three: the merit of S Peter, who was the chief of the crown formed by the bishops; the dignity of the city of Rome; and the authority of a holy synod.⁵¹ The court arrived in Rome at the time of the festival of the chair of Peter in February 450; its coming could easily be construed as marking an alliance between the royal family and Leo. At the feast of the Epiphany early in the following year Leo asserted that, contrary to what had happened in earlier times, the people of God were no longer being persecuted, for now, nothing adorned the lords of the world as much as their being members of the Lord Christ, who did not glory in having been born for rulership as much as they rejoiced in having been reborn through baptism.⁵² Shortly thereafter an infant was buried in the presence of the pope and the entire senate, a body that became more prominent as the century continued. The burial was probably that of Theodosius, a child of Galla Placidia who had died in Spain in about 415. His being reinterred in Rome flashed a signal that the imperial family had come to Rome for good.⁵³

Leo had reason to be grateful for any backing from the imperial authorities in the West just then, for he had become involved in a major controversy concerning a point of doctrine. In December 448 a priest, Eutyches, had written to him from Constantinople, complaining of having been wrongly accused of heresy. Bishop Flavian had asked him to accept that in Christ there were two natures, one divine and the other human, but Eutyches would not do so, fearing to add to what had been expounded by the council of Nicaea. Whereas his own position—that Christ had two natures before they were joined together, but thereafter only one—was a curious one, his reluctance to go

beyond what had been decided at Nicaea was typical of those representing themselves as being doctrinally conservative. But discussions within the church concerning doctrine had moved to different territory since that council had been held. This was certainly true of the issues decided at the ecumenical council held at Ephesos in 431, for whereas the council of Nicaea had been concerned to find words for the eternal dynamics that existed within the Trinity, the bishops who met at Ephesos had considered the relations between Christ's eternal nature and the human one he had taken when he became the son of Mary. For his part, Flavian of Constantinople also wrote to Leo accusing Eutyches of heresy. Both took it for granted that an appeal to the bishop of Rome was a proper course of action, but the initial appeal of Eutyches corresponded to what will be a familiar pattern, that of someone appealing to Rome against a powerful local person. The matter having been brought to his attention, Leo responded appropriately, asking Flavian to justify what he had done, and the emperor Theodosius II to enquire into the matter, in February.⁵⁴

In June 449 the pope made a formal ruling, sending to Flavian a letter known as his Tome, in which he provided an explanation of the relationship between the divine and human elements of Christ that would be seen as standard in the West. Leo argued with a clarity and precision unmatched among the writings of the popes of the period. He began by discussing part of the Apostles' Creed, and went on to demonstrate from the Bible that in Christ 'the property of each nature remained the same, coming together in one person... "[T]he mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" [1 Tim 2: 5] was able to die in one [nature], and unable to die in the other.' Using language that his enemies would feel placed too great a distance between Christ's two natures, Leo was concerned to distinguish between them: 'For just as God was not changed by compassion, so man was not absorbed by the dignity... the Word functions in a way appropriate to the Word, while the flesh carries out what is appropriate to the flesh. One of these shines with miracles, the other succumbs to injuries.' Indeed, whereas Leo acknowledged that what was divine and what was human in Christ could not be separated and that his two natures acted together, he tended to think of him as having died in accordance with one nature and risen from the dead in accordance with the other, or working miracles in one and undergoing sufferings in the other. Leo always remained on guard against views that assimilated the two natures, such as those that could be suggested by the use of the term 'Mother of God' for the Virgin Mary, and after the publication of his Tome, Leo used it only once in those of his sermons and letters that survive, doubtless fearing that the term could be construed in a way favourable to the position of the Miaphysite (also known as Monophysite) heretics, who credited Christ with just one nature. He concluded the Tome by stating that he was sending to Constantinople Julius

the bishop, Renatus the priest, and his son Hilary the deacon, who would act in his stead.⁵⁵

By far the most powerful theological statement of any pope in this period, the Tome would never be challenged in the West, where it was always viewed as a touchstone of correct teaching. Indeed, in the late sixth century people in Rome believed that a draft of Leo's Tome had been corrected by Peter himself before being sent to Flavian. As an abbot in Gaul lay dying in the seventh century he asked to have the Tome read out, for it constituted a full summary of the Catholic faith. In the late seventh century it was thought in Constantinople that Peter had dictated it to Leo.⁵⁶ Whereas it would be remembered long after the circumstances that had generated it had passed into the background, at the time the Tome was issued it formed part of a campaign the pope was waging against the position of Eutyches. On the very day he despatched it to Flavian he also sent letters to the emperor Theodosius II, his sister the empress Pulcheria, respectively the grandson and granddaughter of Theodosius I, a number of abbots in Constantinople, the bishop of Jerusalem, bishop Julian of Cos, who acted on his behalf in the East, and most significantly to the bishops who had already come together in a council at Ephesos. Without consulting the pope, Theodosius had decided that the issue was to be settled by a council. Making the best of a bad job, Leo told the emperor that his three representatives would take his place there and act with justice and kindness so that the depravity of Eutychius's error would be condemned. Writing to the bishops, he invoked the statement of Peter: 'Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God' (Matt 16: 16). Leo felt that Peter had here used two terms that were in apposition, and deduced from the first that Christ had a human nature, and from the second that he had a divine one. He also introduced to them Julian, Renatus, and Hilary, together with a secretary, Dulcitus, whom he envisaged as representing him at their gathering and coming to a common view with them. In a letter sent to Theodosius a week later Leo hinted that there had really been no need for a council, but told him that his legates would be able to remove the scandal in a thorough manner, acting as though Leo himself had been there.⁵⁷ But his confidence was to be belied, for from Leo's perspective the council that took place at Ephesos in August 449 was a disaster. Given the understanding of the relative importance of the various churches held in Rome, it was perhaps understandable that the bishop of Alexandria, Dioscorus, chaired it, but he was a supporter of the views of Eutyches, and the council duly reinstated him in office. Bishop Flavian of Constantinople, who had aligned himself with Leo, was deposed, and when he said that he would appeal to Rome soldiers tried to drag him out of the church where the synod was meeting. Another prominent bishop whose views differed from those of Dioscorus, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, was also

deposed. Dioscorus prevented the Tome, which Leo regarded as the definitive statement on the issue, from being read out, and at one point his legate, the deacon Hilary, cried out in a Latin word that stands alone in a sea of Greek: 'It is opposed!' Hilary fled from Ephesos in secret; two years later, Leo commented that a robbery, not a judgment, had taken place.⁵⁸

Again, the defeated parties were in touch with the pope. Having received appeals from Flavian and Theodoret, in October Leo asked Theodosius to order that a larger council be convened in Italy that would resolve matters, and repeated his request in a letter to Pulcheria. Leo's campaign enjoyed backing from another quarter, for members of the imperial family then residing in Rome—Valentinian III, Galla Placidia, and Valentinian's wife Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius—wrote in support of his position to the Eastern emperor, as Galla Placidia did to Pulcheria. Although there is no reason to believe that Leo was involved in their composition, he had asked for their help, and the letters they wrote have come down to us within a collection of his correspondence. He must have found them congenial, for contrary to the views being expressed in Constantinople they mentioned the superiority that antiquity had given the bishop of Rome above all other bishops, and his ability to judge concerning the faith and bishops. The apostolic see was described as the one whose first bishop had received the heavenly keys. One wonders who stood to gain more from the alliance that had emerged between the political and ecclesiastical elites in Rome, for while Leo was doubtless appreciative of their support, by the middle of the century the position of the enfeebled western Empire was dire, and within a few years Valentinian would be assassinated and Eudoxia taken as a captive to Africa by Vandals. Perhaps, in their weakened state, the emperor and members of his family were trying to gain prestige by associating themselves with the pope. But Theodosius was unmoved by the appeals of his three correspondents, and contented himself with writing short replies in which he indicated his adherence to what had been decided upon at Ephesos.⁵⁹ Leo suffered another setback when a follower of Cyril, Anatolius, was appointed bishop of Constantinople. In July 450 he pointed out to Theodosius that the new bishop had not sent him an expression of his faith, and suggested that he would do well to read with due care works written by the fathers of the church. If disturbances remained in the church, Leo proposed that a universal council be held in Italy.⁶⁰ But before the messengers Leo sent arrived in the royal city, the persistently unhelpful Theodosius died, having fallen from his horse, on 28 July 450.

It fell to his sister Pulcheria to choose the new emperor. A military man with a provincial background who had himself been a captive of the Vandals, Marcian was appointed emperor and married Pulcheria, who nevertheless remained a virgin. The couple moved quickly to overthrow Theodosius's

policies. Before long each had written to Leo, Marcian suggesting that the pope come to the East and hold a synod; if this would be burdensome, he proposed to summon the bishops who would come together and be guided by what Leo defined. Pulcheria had encouraging news to report: Anatolius, whose views had caused Leo to worry, had laid aside his errors and subscribed to the Tome, so becoming the first of a long sequence of patriarchs of Constantinople we shall encounter whose doctrinal convictions fluctuated in accordance with changes in imperial policy. She also reported that Flavian's body had been brought into the city and laid to rest in the basilica of the Holy Apostles. She, too, mentioned that bishops were to come together in a council and decide on matters in accordance with what Leo laid down, although she did not raise the possibility of his attending. Leo replied to Pulcheria expressing his gratitude for the way she had helped his envoys, seen to the recall of bishops who had been exiled, and arranged for the return of Flavian's body, and sought her continuing assistance. The figure of a powerful woman is another we shall encounter more than once. In March Leo wrote to Marcian concerning the council that was to meet, but in June suggested that the council be deferred, as what he obliquely referred to as the difficulties of the present time would make it difficult for all the bishops to come together. Indeed, it was probably a few weeks after Leo wrote that a major battle was fought between Attila, the king of the Huns, and a coalition of his enemies in Gaul at the Catalaunian Plains, and if Leo raised the matter not as a delaying tactic but as a serious concern he must have been hoping for a substantial Western presence at the council. But Marcian was in no mood for delay, and made it clear that the council would soon meet. Leo then proposed that bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum preside in his place, but was no more successful in this endeavour. Addressing himself to the bishops who had come together, Leo told them to think of him as presiding in the persons of the two bishops and two priests who had been sent by the apostolic see, for he was present in those who substituted for him.⁶¹

The doctrinal settlement of the council that met in the church of S Euphemia at Chalcedon on 8 October 451 was in accordance with Leo's hopes. In its second session his Tome was read out, and well received, for the bishops broke into a series of acclamations, among them: 'Peter has uttered this through Leo!'⁶² Some of the language the council used to express the doctrine was borrowed from that of Leo, in particular its stress that each of the two natures retained its own properties as they came together to form one person and substance, so that Christ could be seen as existing in two natures. It also employed different terminology, referring as it did to a union of the natures 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'. Dioscorus of Alexandria and Eutyches, the latter having refused to attend the council despite having been summoned three times, were deposed. In other

respects the council was less pleasing to Leo. While the bishops applauded his Tome, they accepted it, together with the synodical letters of the blessed Cyril, formerly shepherd of the church at Alexandria, as a statement of what they believed, so implicitly denying the primacy of the Tome that was taken for granted in the West. Moreover, in the absence of a patriarch of Alexandria, it had been possible for a rival prelate to advance his position. Tucked away at the end of the proceedings of the council was a decree, technically not a canon although it is usually described as the 28th canon issued by the council, that dealt with the privileges of the church of Constantinople. Whereas pope Damasus had seen the authority of the bishop of Rome as being based not on the decisions of synods but the words of the Lord, Valentinian had provided three criteria, among which the dignity of Rome was precarious at that time, while the authority of a holy synod could suggest a misinterpretation of a canon of the council of Nicaea, or the claims of the council held in the royal city in 381 that pope Damasus had vehemently rejected. The council of Chalcedon, purporting to follow some unnamed fathers and the council that had met in Constantinople in 381, decreed that the throne of New Rome, a city adorned by its rulership and senate, was to enjoy privileges equal to those of the most holy throne of Old Rome, and be second after her. This is a sloppily worded piece of legislation that seems to envisage an initial Roman primacy yielding to an equality in which Constantinople would nevertheless rank second after Rome.⁶³ Leo's representatives had objected violently when the decree was read out, and with good reason; a Byzantine author of the twelfth century felt that the council of Chalcedon had raised the bishop of Constantinople to the place of highest honour and placed under him all the dioceses of the world.⁶⁴

The council of Chalcedon was more tightly controlled by the emperor than the councils held in Ephesus in 431 and 449 had been. It took place just across the Bosphorus from Constantinople, at a site that had been chosen because of its nearness to the palace, and a group of high officials was present to keep a close eye on proceedings.⁶⁵ When the bishops attending the council wrote to Leo, they expressed their joy at the outcome, and described him as having played the role of an interpreter of the voice of Peter. But there was a sting in the tail. The bishops confessed that they had decreed that the church of Constantinople was to have an honour second to that of Rome, in accordance with what the council of 381 had decreed; they do not seem to have known that Rome had yet to accept that council. They admitted that Leo's representatives had strongly opposed the move, but on the other hand Marcian and Pulcheria supported it, and so they sought confirmation of what they had done from Leo. Marcian wrote to him in similar terms, as did bishop Anatolius, who had some hostile things to say about the conduct of Leo's

legates. In May 452 Leo wrote to Marcian congratulating him on his role in overcoming the heresy but mentioning his astonishment and grief at what he saw as Anatolius's spirit of ambition, suggesting that it would be fitting for him to be modest rather than immoderate. Whereas the bishops at the council had tried to assimilate the ecclesiastical status of the city to its political status, Leo distinguished between them, just as he had concerning the two natures of Christ. He felt that Anatolius should not disdain being bishop of the royal city, even though he could not make it an apostolic see, and took a stand on the basis of the canons of the holy fathers and the decrees of the council of Nicaea. He also wrote to Pulcheria and, at greater length, Anatolius, whom he accused of seeking to undermine the dignity of the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch. He was scathing about Anatolius' appeal to the council that had met in 381, and told him not to rely on something that 'certain bishops' had written 60 years ago, which had never been sent to the apostolic see. But to no avail, for in February Marcian had addressed an edict to the citizens of Constantinople confirming the teaching of Chalcedon and forbidding all further discussion of religion. Only in March 453 did Leo write to the bishops who were apparently still at Chalcedon, accepting what it had done to confirm the faith, but warning that nothing could be done against the council of Nicaea and that no-one, moved by ambition, was to take what did not belong to him. But as Leo was later horrified to learn, when his letter was read out to the bishops, nothing after the section confirming their actions concerning the faith was read out, so they remained unaware of his polemic.⁶⁶

The matter would never be resolved to Leo's satisfaction. In 457 Marcian died, to be succeeded by another soldier, Leo. Immediately afterwards a supporter of the council of Chalcedon who had been appointed patriarch of Alexandria, Proterius, was lynched by a mob, and in the face of hostility from the supporters of Miaphysite doctrine the new emperor decided to move slowly. He seems to have invited the pope to attend a new council, but Leo would not move, and in the following year sent the emperor a long letter, buttressed by extracts from the fathers of the church, that supported the teaching that Christ had two natures.⁶⁷

Despite Leo's convictions, he had to deal with people who had different understandings of the status of the pope, his relationship with Peter, and indeed the position of Peter. Different versions of the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon suggested different understandings. At one point the Greek text refers to 'the most holy and blessed Leo, archbishop of Great and Senior Rome... together with the thrice-blessed and wholly renowned Peter the apostle, who is the rock and stay of the catholic church and the foundation of the orthodox faith.' The Latin translation goes much further in assimilating the figures of Leo and Peter; 'the most holy and most blessed pope, the head of the

universal church... endowed as he is with the dignity of Peter the apostle, who is called the foundation of the church, the rock of faith and the doorkeeper of the heavenly kingdom.'⁶⁸ The role of the bishop of Rome within the church was a matter to which Leo's thoughts often turned. Writing in 446 to Anastasius, the bishop of Thessaloniki, he drew on a concept familiar from the aesthetic thought of the period, pointing out that the close union of the whole body brings about a unified health and beauty. A union of this kind was based on the concord of the whole body, but in particular required harmony between the bishops. And whereas they had a common dignity, they did not share a generic rank, for whereas the apostles had been similar in honour they were different in power; whereas they were equal in having been chosen, it was given to one to be above the others. In each province there were bishops whose opinion was considered first, whereas those in the greater cities had a wider sphere of responsibility; among these, the care of the whole church flowed to the single see of Peter, and nothing was to be separated from this head. Anastasius had been called to a portion of care, but not a fullness of power. It was in this spirit that Leo gently corrected the great Cyprian: Whereas the bishop of Carthage had thought of the other apostles as having been what Peter had been, endowed with an equal participation of both honour and power, the pope considered that along with a similarity of honour there was a kind of difference in power.⁶⁹

Leo was also confronted with problems within Rome. A serious one arose when Manichaeans were discovered in the city. Adherents of the faith taught by a Persian, Mani, who had been put to death in 276, by the early fourth century they had arrived in Rome. Those detected in the time of Leo may have been Africans who had fled Carthage following its capture by Vandals in 439. In November 443 Leo told the people to inform the priests if they knew of any Manichaeans, wherever they might be hiding, and in a homily delivered on 12 December he described an investigation that had taken place. An assembly had been held at which Leo had sat with bishops and priests, in the presence of Christian men and nobles; the presence of the laity in what was essentially a religious matter is noteworthy. Male and female members of the sect were summoned, who told of a shameful atrocity involving a 10-year-old girl. Leo advised his hearers, especially women, to have nothing to do with such people, and pass on any information they might have. In his Christmas sermon Leo stressed how evil their doctrine was. Other heresies contained an element of truth, an unusual concession, for Leo generally believed that there was nothing sound or chaste outside the Catholic church, but there was nothing at all in the most wicked teaching of the Manichaeans that could even be partially tolerated. At the feast of the Epiphany on 6 January Leo spoke of their troubling the church, and on 30 January wrote to the bishops throughout Italy

asking them to be on their guard against Manichaeans. In March he warned his hearers to be on their lookout, for some Manichaeans were taking communion, although they only received the Body; their practices were again mentioned in a sermon preached in September. The problem seems to have been overcome by the time a law was issued on 19 June 445 that refers to the judgment Leo had made in the presence of the senate. But it was to recur, for several popes in the late fifth and early sixth centuries burned the books of the Manichaeans and sent them into exile.⁷⁰

Towards the end of his life, Leo faced new challenges. In 452 a longstanding enemy of the Empire, Attila the Hun, was seeking new opportunities. After a gigantic protection racket he had operated against the East came to an end he turned his attention to Gaul, only to be defeated by a coalition of those he threatened at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Thereafter he moved into Italy, but while still north of the River Po he received some unexpected visitors. According to a source close to Leo, one perhaps not inclined to minimise the part he played, it seemed good to the emperor, the senate, and Roman people to seek peace, although its use of such formulaic and traditional language raises suspicions as to its reliability. In any case, we are told that Leo undertook the task of visiting Attila, together with two well-chosen laymen, Avienus, who had been consul two years previously, and Trygetius, a former prefect who had negotiated a rather generous peace with Vandals in Africa in 433. This was not the first time that a pope was associated with an embassy, for when the threat of Alaric had loomed in 409 pope Innocent joined a fruitless legation the senate sent to the emperor Honorius in Ravenna; to his shame, there is reason to believe that Innocent stayed there until the danger had passed. Leo, we are told, trusted in God. The legation was worthily received, and Attila so rejoiced in the presence of the pope that he ordered that the war was to cease and withdrew to the further side of the Danube, with a promise of peace; a shorter account credits Leo with undertaking a legation for the good of the Roman name and freeing all Italy from the danger of enemies. By the time the story was told in the eighth century, the lay ambassadors had dropped out of the picture, and Leo alone is said to have confronted Attila. But he was said to have obtained all that he sought, and after he left the people around Attila asked why the Hun had treated him with such reverence. Attila replied that he had seen a white-haired man dressed as a priest standing next to Leo, holding a sword, who threatened him with a terrible death if he failed to do all that was asked of him. The man can only have been Peter.⁷¹ Whereas modern scholars have been reluctant to credit Leo with the departure of Attila, without being able to supply a universally accepted alternative explanation, the story could clearly be told in a way that made much of his authority. Three years later the Vandal king Geiseric attacked Rome. On this occasion, we are

told, Leo met the invader outside the walls and brought it about that, although all things were in Geiseric's power, he would abstain from fire, slaughter, and cruel conduct. The outcome was not impressive, for the wealth of the city and thousands of captives, including the empress and her daughters, were taken to Carthage. Nevertheless, the image of a pope standing before a hostile invader was a powerful one, and would persist.⁷²

The attachment Leo had for S Peter could be seen after he died. For most of the third century, and to a lesser extent thereafter, popes had been interred in the underground burial places outside the city known as cata-combs, while during the fourth and early fifth centuries they had been laid to rest in a number of churches. It was Leo who took what would be the decisive step of being buried in S Peter's church, or, according to one version of the text that describes this, next to S Peter. Whereas it would be wrong to see Leo's choice of burial place as marking an immediate caesura with preceding practice, for two of the following three popes would be buried elsewhere, his selection was generally followed by later popes, and was another manifestation of the close identification between the bishop of Rome and the apostle. But another factor was in play. During the fifth century some members of the imperial family had been buried in a mausoleum the emperor Honorius had built next to a transept of S Peter's. Theodosius, a son of Galla Placidia, had been buried there as recently as 450, and his mother may have followed him there shortly afterwards. Constantine had erected a mausoleum in Constantinople dedicated to the Holy Apostles in which, as a historian of the mid-fifth century observed, emperors and bishops were buried, and the practice of the imperial family in Rome, no less than that of the Merovingian family that was later to rule in Gaul, clearly imitated it. In his choice of burial place, Leo as well may have copied a practice that had developed among emperors, first in Constantinople and then in Rome. There will be other occasions when we encounter such imitations.⁷³

Leo was one of the greatest popes. Doubtless the issues that emerged while he held office provided him with more scope to display his talents than most popes enjoyed, as did the length of the period for which he held office, for his length of tenure would not be matched by any other pope in late antiquity. But his lapidary statements on the position of S Peter, the clarity of his writing on the person and natures of Christ in the Tome, his victory over the powerful Dioscorus of Alexandria, and his adroit dealings with a range of earthly powers show how extensive his talents were. Someone who made a copy of the *Liber Pontificalis* towards the end of the eleventh century, perhaps in the monastery of Farfa to the northeast of Rome, added a note to the text, stating that 99 years, five months, and 26 days passed from the death of pope Silvester to Leo I. The period is too long by several years, although the error is

forgivable, as the cumbersome Roman system of numerals meant that mistakes in arithmetic were made very easily. But the annotation reveals a perception that Leo had been the greatest pope since the time of Constantine, a judgment few would dispute. It would be nearly 150 years before the copyist made a similar addition to his manuscript.⁷⁴

The popes who followed Leo were active in different ways. **Hilary (19 November 461–29 February 468)** had, in his capacity of deacon, been one of Leo's representatives at the council held in Ephesos in 449. He had been born in Sardinia, but most of his activities as pope were confined to Rome, and give an idea of the range of concerns of bishops within their cities at that time. He undertook extensive building works at the Lateran, in the baptistery of which he erected three chapels, dedicated to S John the Baptist, S John the Evangelist, and the Holy Cross. The first dedication was obviously appropriate in a baptistery, to which the second formed a natural pendant. Hilary may also have had a personal reason for dedicating a chapel to the Evangelist, for he attributed his escape after the council held at Ephesos in 449 to the intervention of the Evangelist, who was believed to have lived in the town for many years and been buried there. The third and most lavishly fitted-out chapel housed parts of the true cross. Its fittings included a golden cross with jewels weighing 20 lbs, above which stood a golden arch on onyx columns, topped by a golden lamb, alluding to Christ's being the Lamb of God as he hung on the cross. In front of the chapel Hilary installed an impressive fountain. These three chapels are the first known to have been built within churches in Rome, although earlier in the century pope Boniface I had built a chapel in the cemetery of S Felicity, near her body. Not long before, Leo had allowed the Eucharist to be celebrated more than once on important days, and whereas it took a different form Hilary's establishment of subsidiary centres of worship and devotion constituted another step along the road away from the Christian people being thought of as a unified body.

These were not Hilary's only benefactions, for he also provided many vessels and ornaments of different kinds for the Lateran and the basilicas dedicated to Peter, Paul, and Laurence. The large number of chandeliers, lanterns, lamps, vessels to hold wine, chalices, and other implements made of gold, silver, and, less commonly, bronze for which Hilary was responsible are sufficient to disabuse one of any notion of liturgical simplicity in this period. Some way into the sixth century, the author Cassiodorus mentions the vessels used by the deacons of Rome as being spoken of throughout the world, and as we shall see the value of such items sometimes tempted their custodians to use them for purposes their donors had not intended. Doubtless ceremony was more restrained in the titular churches, but Hilary was also concerned to beautify their worship, providing for this purpose 25 silver vessels to contain

wine, each weighing 10 lbs, an additional 25 silver vessels of the same weight to be used for a similar purpose, and 50 silver chalices for ordinary use; wisely, he prescribed that these were to be stored at the Lateran and Sta Maria Maggiore.⁷⁵

Hilary was also responsible for works at S Laurence's, where he is credited with what on the surface seem an odd group of buildings: a monastery, a bath, another bath in the open air, a residence that was dedicated to S Stephen, and two libraries. The word used for residence, *praetorium*, was one generally used to refer to the place where a provincial governor lived; in the Vulgate translation of the Bible into Latin it is used for the residence of the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate. It suggests a stately and imposing building, which Hilary presumably erected to live in, in which case he must have chosen not to dwell in the Lateran. The residence was accompanied by the accoutrements of a very civilised life, which included two baths; that each is referred to by a singular noun indicates that they were probably not public baths such as a later pope built. Perhaps they operated on a system similar to that in Ravenna, where clergy were allowed to use the bath next to the residence of the bishop free of charge every Tuesday and Friday. But we need not think of Hilary spending all his hours of leisure disporting in the bath, for he also installed two libraries. One might think that one would have sufficed, but it is possible that one of them contained secular works and the other Christian books. The style in which Hilary lived obviously indicates the position its bishop had come to hold within Rome; perhaps, although this is not so clear, it hints as to the social background of Hilary.⁷⁶

Yet there were limits to the authority of the bishop. It was probably while Hilary was pope that a powerful general, Ricimer, paid for a mosaic to be installed in the apse of the church in Rome later known as S Agata dei Goti, in which those who did not accept the teaching of the council of Nicaea on the relationship between the Father and the Son worshipped. Such people by then made up a large proportion of the army. At the end of the sixth century Gregory the Great dedicated the church to Catholic use, although we do not know whether it had continued to be used by non-Nicenes throughout the intervening period.⁷⁷ The church was located in the Subura quarter, famous for its colourful life, into which the Catholic church had failed to put deep roots, for, perched as it was between the Quirinal and Viminal hills, it was remote from any titular churches.⁷⁸ Unfortunately it is not clear whether the church had been constructed as a place of worship for non-Catholics, or was originally a Catholic church that was turned over to the use of non-Catholics; nor is it clear whether it came to be used by non-Nicenes at the time of Ricimer or had been so used before, although we may presume that it was used for this purpose then.⁷⁹ But in either case, as events when it was dedicated as a

Catholic church over a century later made clear, it was believed to be the home of hostile supernatural forces, and its existence revealed a surprising weakness in the leadership of the church in Rome, for elsewhere strong bishops, such as Ambrose in Milan and John Chrysostom in Constantinople, had been able to prevent opponents of the council of Nicaea from obtaining the use of churches.⁸⁰

Pope **Simplicius (3 March 468–10 March 482)** went further than his predecessor in the building of religious edifices, for he was responsible for a new church. Whereas the Roman church had Constantine to thank for its great infrastructure, as imperial involvement in building for church purposes diminished the bishops assumed more responsibility for this activity. Some manuscripts of the *Liber Pontificalis* credit Constantine with having built two churches at the suggestion of pope Silvester, perhaps out of a sense that this is what could be expected to have happened at the time they were written. Pope Julius (337–352) is said to have established two basilicas, one near the forum and the other across the river in Trastevere, and when the reigning emperors decided in 386 to undertake major work at S Paul's, they instructed the prefect of the city, Sallustius, to discuss the operation with the venerable bishop and his intimates, the senate, and the Christian people. But the emperor remained responsible for the work, which a poet thought displayed royal pomp, a good ruler having expended many talents on it. Yet an inscription in the triumphal arch of the large basilica pope Sixtus (432–440) built in honour of the Virgin Mary, Sta Maria Maggiore, in a commanding position on the Crispian Hill, made it clear where credit for the building was due, for it proudly proclaimed the donor and the beneficiaries: 'Bishop Xystus (sic), for the people of God'. The move to sponsorship of new churches built for the common people of Rome by the city's bishop, in distinction to the imperial foundations and the titular churches, was a pointer to future practice.⁸¹

Simplicius was responsible for the church on the Caelian Hill, pleasantly full of light, dedicated to S Stephen, and now known as S Stefano Rotondo. It is possible that construction may have begun in the time of Hilary, who is known to have been a devotee of S Stephen, and work on its decorations continued for some decades after Simplicius died. The cult of S Stephen, the first among the martyrs, had boomed after his relics were discovered in 415, and large churches were erected in his honour. The empress Eudocia, who lived in Jerusalem prior to her death in 460, had been responsible for one just outside that city, in which she was buried, while in the time of pope Leo a noblewoman who had adopted a religious life, Demetrias, had erected a church in his honour inside a villa on her estate a few miles outside Rome. Simplicius's church was built in an unusual circular shape that recalled that of the church of the Anastasis, or the Holy Sepulchre, erected in Jerusalem by Constantine, which had recently

been copied in a church dedicated to the Virgin that the empress Verina (457–474) had constructed in Constantinople. We may speculate as to whether the dedication and shape of Simplicius's church imitated what these female patrons had recently done. As was the case with the great basilicas erected by Constantine in honour of the martyrs and the basilica Sixtus erected in honour of Mary, S Stefano Rotondo had no establishment of priests, and so must have lacked a regular congregation. Simplicius went some way to overcoming the awkward situation that the absence of clergy from some of the largest churches in the city must have created by establishing that priests from the sixth, the seventh, and the first and third regions of the city would make penitence and baptism available at S Peter's, S Paul's, and S Laurence's respectively, perhaps in imitation of practice in Constantinople, where clergy from the cathedral served the churches of the Virgin, S Theodore, and S Irene.⁸² He dedicated a number of other churches. One, a basilica dedicated to S Andrew, had been erected on the Esquiline Hill for secular use by Iunius Bassus, consul in 331. It had come into the possession of a military man, Valila, who bequeathed it to the pope. Another basilica was erected in honour of S Stephen, next to S Laurence's, and one to the martyr S Bibiana, adjacent to the Lincian palace.⁸³

It was while Simplicius was pope that Rome ceased to be part of the Roman Empire, when, in 476, the last emperor in the West, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the general Odovacer, who was in turn succeeded in 493 by one of the great rulers of the period, the Ostrogothic king Theoderic. So began a period during which Italy was not only removed from imperial sway, but found itself under the rule of people, often, although perhaps misleadingly, referred to as Arians, who did not accept the teaching of the council of Nicaea that Christ was of one substance with God the Father. It is hard to evaluate the importance of the transition to rule by non-Catholics. It may have given the bishop of Rome, now free of imperial oversight, more of a free hand in his city, and the same was probably true of the senate. But the new situation was not entirely positive, for indirect evidence suggests that some Catholics were very cognisant of the doctrinal deficiencies of the newcomers. A surprisingly large number of manuscripts of the work Hilary of Poitiers had written on the Trinity were produced in areas that came to be ruled by non-Nicenes during the late fifth and sixth centuries in Italy and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere; one copy may contain marginal notes written by an African bishop, Fulgentius of Ruspe, who was exiled by the non-Catholic government of the Vandals in Africa. An annotation preserved in a manuscript of the twelfth century records that a landowner near Cumae corrected a text of part of Augustine's work on the Trinity in the 33rd year of the reign of the emperor Justinian, and an archbishop of Ravenna seems to have written a book attacking anti-Nicene theology during the 570s. The numerous churches erected in Ravenna during

and immediately after the period in which the city had been the capital of the Ostrogothic kingdom, some of them lavishly decorated, suggest competitive building on the part of Nicene and non-Nicene believers.⁸⁴ And whereas relations between the popes and their non-Catholic sovereigns seem on the whole to have been good, the bishops of Rome remained loyal to the emperor who continued to rule in Constantinople. Towards the end of the fifth century pope Gelasius wrote a litany, a form of prayer in which petitions were responded to by the congregation, and among those prayed for within it were the religious sovereigns and all their troops. No prayer was offered for the king in Italy, although a version of the litany produced in Gaul amended the text so that the king was prayed for at this point.⁸⁵

Yet relations with the emperor were not straightforward, for it was during this period that the churches of Rome and Constantinople ceased to be in communion. In July 482 the emperor Zeno issued a document named the *Henotikon*, a Greek word referring to the 'oneness' it was expected to bring about between the supporters of the council of Chalcedon and their opponents. The document was issued in the expectation that correct belief would ensure the destruction of enemies, peace, favourable weather, and abundant crops; but from a Roman point of view it was seriously deficient. It failed to commit itself as to whether Christ had one or two natures, and when it asserted that the miracles and sufferings of Christ were both of one being it seemed to wander from the position of Leo. Indeed, it failed to mention his *Tome*, taken in the West as the definitive resolution of the issues, although it did mention writings of bishop Cyril of Alexandria, and by condemning what it described as other views, whether expressed at Chalcedon or elsewhere, it implied, without actually saying it, that the great council had been in error. Such views were not likely to find favour in Rome, for, as the priest Trifolius put it when writing a few decades later to Faustus, a senator who was interested in theological questions, not one syllable or tiny particle could ever be added to or subtracted from the council of Chalcedon. Letters Simplicius sent to both the emperor and patriarch in 482 show that he was concerned at the way things were going, but the job of responding to the *Henotikon* would be left to the pope who followed him.⁸⁶

Felix III (13 March 483–1 March 492) was the first pope since the time of Sixtus to have been born in Rome. He came from a clerical background, for his father, also named Felix, was a priest, to whom pope Leo had given the task of seeing to repairs in S Paul's basilica. As Simplicius lay dying he had issued a decree that the election of his successor was to involve laypeople, and Basilius, the praetorian prefect, acted on behalf of king Odovacer to oversee the process. Although we do not know exactly how the procedure operated, it is clear that Felix entered office with the blessing of the post-imperial administration in

Italy. The *Liber Pontificalis* notes that he was bishop in the time of king Odovacer until the time of king Theoderic. The text is careful to record the reigning emperor for almost every pope from the time of Peter until the late fourth century, when the formulaic expression disappears. Although the reemergence of the practice of indicating the period in which a pope held office by supplying the names of those who then ruled is doubtless a pointer to when work on the text began in earnest, it suggests that Odovacer and then Theoderic were thought of as being similar to emperors.⁸⁷

Indeed, a benign attitude on the part of a non-Catholic government may have been welcome, for Felix had to deal with complex affairs. The most important was the Henotikon Zeno had issued, but to this was joined the installation of a patriarch of Alexandria who opposed the teachings of the council of Chalcedon. The arrival of his displaced predecessor in Rome was a further stimulus to action. On becoming pope Felix sent two bishops to the royal city, Misenus and Vitalis, with a letter to Zeno informing him of his election. This is the first occasion for which such a letter has come down to us, and it was sent to Constantinople as no emperor now ruled in Italy. But the letter was more than a diplomatic nicety, for Felix informed the emperor that he ought to obey the decrees of heaven, recognising that whereas the highest part of earthly affairs had been entrusted to him, matters that were divine were to be discharged by the stewards who had been assigned by the deity. Hence the Catholic church should be allowed freedom; indeed, the emperor could expect his power to benefit from this. It was his part to learn rather than teach holy things. The bishops who carried the letter were told to confer with the abbot of the monastery of the Sleepless Monks, staunch supporters of the council of Chalcedon, who had been putting pressure on Felix to move more quickly. When word came from Zeno that the patriarch Acacius had repented, Felix sent two bishops to enquire into the matter, but they were bribed and did not act in accordance with the instructions Felix had given them. When they returned he held a council that excommunicated them. Felix also excommunicated Acacius, bringing about a situation whereby, for the first time, the churches of Rome and Constantinople were out of communion. But it was a sign of the weakness of Rome's position that the defender Tutus who carried the letter of excommunication to Constantinople was himself bribed and failed to fulfil his commission. It was left to monks to pin the excommunication on Acacius's vestments as he was celebrating the liturgy. Following the death of Acacius in 490, an orthodox patriarch of Constantinople was appointed, but Felix refused to be in communion with him until he had removed the names of Acacius and Peter of Alexandria from the diptychs, a list of those commemorated in prayer during the liturgy. At his death the schism remained unhealed. Both his intransigence and imperial machinations

were to blame, but it had become clear that legations sent to Constantinople could not be relied on to act in accordance with instructions.⁸⁸

Whereas Felix had grown up in a Roman clerical family, **Gelasius (1 March 492–21 November 496)** was born in Africa, one of a small number of popes in this period to come from outside Italy.⁸⁹ But he had managed to work his way into the centre of church life, for he had been involved in drafting the correspondence of both Simplicius and Felix. Before the death of pope Damasus in 384 the scholarly Jerome, who claimed that his words were in the mouth of the pope, had been spoken of as a potential pope, and the Tome of Leo may have been one of his letters against Eutyches concerning the true incarnation of Christ that were said to have been drafted on his behalf by Prosper, a deacon from Aquitaine then living in Rome, although this may have involved working through sermons Leo had preached and excerpting relevant passages to be incorporated in the Tome. But Gelasius is the first person we know of who moved from drafting correspondence on behalf of a pope, or popes, to assuming papal office, a path that others would follow later.⁹⁰ The *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with a long list of pieces of writing, headed by five books against Nestorius and Eutyches, the heretics whose ideas had been condemned at the councils of Ephesos and Chalcedon respectively, but which remained keenly discussed; a few decades later Boethius would write a work, titled *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*. Hymns in the style, or perhaps metre, of Ambrose are also attributed to him. The two books he is said to have written against Arius dealt with an author whose ideas had been condemned at Nicaea in 325 and had ceased to have much traction among Romans by the end of the fourth century. However, there is no need to believe that Gelasius was flogging a dead horse, for as we have seen, rule in Italy since 476 had been in the hands people thought of as Arians, and whereas they were of gentle disposition and, with the possible exception of the church in which Ricimer installed a mosaic, made no attempt to take over the churches of the Catholics, unlike the Vandals in Africa, the pope may have felt the need to make a statement against this particular heretic. Ambrose had begun to write hymns in response to the activities of ‘Arians’ in Milan, and perhaps Gelasius’s hymns were part of a broad campaign against the teachings attributed to Arius. Gelasius was also responsible for a litany, prayers for the mass, and what are described as many letters on the faith, written in a polished style, and a work destined for a readership within Rome we shall shortly consider. All in all it is an impressive output, and Gelasius is the last pope for 100 years the *Liber Pontificalis* credits with any written work.⁹¹

Not surprisingly, given his role in the way his predecessor had conducted himself, Gelasius’s relations with the emperor Anastasius, who succeeded Zeno in 481, were awkward. Only once did he write to the emperor, and the

bluntness of its address bordered on rudeness: ‘Gelasius the bishop to Anastasius the augustus’. In it he made what has been seen as a big statement, according to which the world was chiefly governed by two agencies, the consecrated authority of bishops and the royal power. But of these, the former was the more significant, for bishops would have to render account for the kings of men at the divine judgment.⁹² But the importance of this text can be exaggerated. Similar things had been said before, as by John Chrysostom, who had declared that ‘one appointed to the priesthood is a more responsible guardian of the earth and what transpires upon it than one who wears the purple.’⁹³ Of Gelasius’s standing, however, there could be no doubt. In 495 a synod was held at which the errant legate bishop Misenus presented himself, and asked to be restored to communion. This having been done, the 48 bishops and 66 priests who were in attendance uttered some remarkably enthusiastic acclamations. ‘Hear, O Christ, life to Gelasius!’ was chanted 15 times. The words were formulaic, typical of the acclamations that were part of the public life of the period, and are paralleled by the terms in which Augustine was acclaimed when he announced his choice of a successor as bishop of Hippo. But others could only have been used of a bishop of Rome. ‘Lord Peter, take care of him’, ‘We see you as the vicar of Christ’, and ‘We see you as the apostle Peter’ suggested a close identity between the pope and Peter, and indeed Christ.⁹⁴

Although Gelasius does not seem to have been responsible for a text known as the *Decretum Gelasianum*, which seems to have been compiled slightly after his time and, given that it accepts the council of Constantinople held in 381, may not entirely reflect a Roman viewpoint of his time, it gives a clear summary of the position of the church on a range of issues at his period. It states that the Roman church was placed over other churches, not because of the decrees of councils but through the familiar words Christ spoke to Peter. He was associated with Paul, who was made a martyr on the same day as Peter, in the time of Nero, contrary to what some heretics babbled; side by side these two consecrated the Roman church to Christ and placed it above all other churches in the whole world. Peter’s first see was in Rome, which does not have a stain, a spot, or any such thing; his second was in Alexandria, consecrated in the name of Peter by his disciple the evangelist Mark, and the third was at Antioch, where Peter lived before he went to Rome. The document then proceeds to list various texts that were to be accepted by the church. Whereas no-one was able to lay down any foundation other than Christ, the holy Roman church accepted the Old and New Testaments and after these other writings. It lists the synods of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesos, and Chalcedon, and then the works of the fathers which were received in the church, of whom 12 fathers are named, seven of whom had written in Latin

and five in Greek, the most recent among them Leo. It specifies that not one iota of his Tome was to be disputed. The decretal letters which the blessed popes had at various times issued from Rome in response to the enquiries of various fathers were also to be accepted. Accounts of the deeds of martyrs, however, were not read in the Roman church, for their authors were unknown and the stories they told possibly inaccurate, although the lives of Eastern fathers were to be accepted with honour. The works of Rufinus and others criticised by Jerome were not to be received, although mention is made of some of the works of Origen that Jerome did not criticise and were to be accepted. Other works, the first among them the synod of Sirmium convened by Constantius in 357 that took a position strongly opposed to that of the council of Nicaea, were definitely not to be received. One has the feeling of an institution whose teachings reposed on a firm foundation of literary texts, but ones that needed to be demarcated very precisely from others that were contrary to what it held. If the *Decretum* was not drawn up as a purely antiquarian exercise, it suggests the kind of boundary keeping that would be characteristic of a body on the defensive.⁹⁵

Gelasius is the first pope since Leo known to have had dealings with Manichaeans, and when some were discovered he ordered them to be exiled and burned their books before the church of Sta Maria Maggiore.⁹⁶ It was certainly a forthright response, but the pope was probably acting in adherence to the Roman law that continued to apply in Italy, despite its having ceased to be part of the Empire. Books held suspect on religious grounds had been burned in Rome since republican times, and continued to be in the Christian Empire; in 475 a claimant to the throne in the East had ordered that copies of Leo's Tome and the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon were to be burned. The practice would continue in the West, for when the Visigothic king Reccared became a Catholic towards the end of the sixth century he ordered that 'Arian' books were to be burned.⁹⁷ These people held secular authority, but there is no need to think of Gelasius's act as intruding into functions of the state, for Roman law prescribed that astrologers who failed to return to the true religion when their books were burned under the eyes of Catholic bishops were to be expelled from Rome and other cities, and we may take it that he was acting according to the provisions of the law.⁹⁸

In 391 the emperor Theodosius I had forbidden performance of the traditional sacrifices and closed the temples, and in the following year outlawed worship conducted in private homes.⁹⁹ But other manifestations of the religious life that had flourished before the Empire became officially Christian were possible, against which there was no legal recourse, and Gelasius was confronted with a very public and well-supported one. Within the city people were patronising the Lupercalia, an ancient fertility ceremony

in which scantily clad men raced through the streets hitting women they passed, in the belief that they would conceive. Gelasius expressed himself forcefully against this observance, against which he wrote a sternly worded tract. He accused the unnamed leader of proclaiming publicly and indeed officially that illness was due to failure to worship demons, as the pope called the old gods, and of preaching sacrifice to the god Februarius, after whom the month in which the Lupercalia were observed was named. The people who participated in what Gelasius thought of as pagan worship claimed to be Christians, but in fact they were neither Christians nor pagans, and were guilty of spiritual adultery. The pope's response was clear-cut: no baptised person, no Christian was to participate in these practices; only pagans, whose rite it was, were to perform it. So seriously did he take the issue that he also composed prayers that dealt with it to be used in the mass.¹⁰⁰

Whereas the people who participated in the rite were of low status, Gelasius described their backers as well-to-do people who sat in big houses. Parts of his tract were addressed to a single person, although he did not name that individual. But a superscription that occurs in manuscripts describes the work as having been written against Andromachus and other Romans. As it happens we know of a Roman who bore the name Andromachus at just that time. In 489 a person of that name held a senior position in the government of Odovacer, that of Master of the Offices, and it was presumably in that capacity that Odovacer sent him to Constantinople on business of state. By then Gelasius had become pope, and he wrote to Andromachus asking him to speak on his behalf with the patriarch Acacius.¹⁰¹ Assuming that we are dealing with the one Andromachus, Gelasius clearly thought of him as a Christian capable of acting usefully on his behalf at the time he wrote to him, and his claim that illness followed a lapse in traditional religious practice must have shocked the pope. There was more than one way of understanding the position of someone like Andromachus, for despite his patronage of the Lupercalia and comments on the god Februarius he thought of himself as a Christian, whereas Gelasius was adamant that those involved with the Lupercalia were not Christians. Differences between lay and clerical views would be recurrent in the Roman church, and the latter could be more successful than our sources might lead one to believe. Gelasius mentions the Lupercalia as having been observed a few decades earlier, in the time of Ricimer, but as not having been suppressed by earlier popes; perhaps they had to tolerate something they lacked the power to close down. And whereas Gelasius's polemic against the Lupercalia was argued with his typical vigour, we do not know whether it was successful. Whereas it would be easy to see the observance of the Lupercalia as one of the last gasps of a dying 'paganism', whatever may be understood by that word, the reality was more complex.

Reading between the lines, the popes of the second half of the fifth century experienced more failure than the sources might immediately suggest. They had been unable to do anything against the church patronised by Ricimer, and the measures Gelasius took against the Manichaeans did not overcome the problem they posed, for early in the sixth century more of them were discovered in the city, causing two further popes to burn their books and send them into exile.¹⁰² Similarly, whereas Gelasius's campaign against the Lupercalia may have been successful, there is no clear evidence that it was.

The enthusiasm of prominent Romans for the observance of the Lupercalia was a sign of deeply felt attitudes to the past of their city. The festivity began at the Lupercal, a cave at the foot of the Palatine where a wolf was believed to have suckled the infants Romulus and Remus, and a statue of her is known to have stood in earlier times. Indeed, the name of the celebration recalled that very wolf (*lupa*). The historian Livy, who told the story of the wolf and the twins, was being studied at that time. Towards the end of the fourth century one of the most prominent figures in the public life of the period, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, had begun work revising the text of Livy's long work, a task that was later taken over by others. About 100 years later another Symmachus, perhaps the great grandson of the earlier one, is said to have imitated his ancestors by producing a history of Rome in seven books. In his discussion of the issues raised by the Lupercalia, Gelasius drew upon a passage from Livy's histories that he specifies as being from the second decade, and is no longer extant. Coins issued by the senate towards the end of the century depicted the wolf giving suck to Romulus and Remus, and the tree beneath which this was believed to have happened.¹⁰³ Indeed, the historical imagination of the inhabitants of Rome reached still further back into the legendary past. A visitor from Constantinople was struck by their desire to care for and preserve the old treasures of the city, among them the very ship they believed Aeneas to have sailed on when he fled from Troy, which was kept in a special building by the river. The end of the fifth century had witnessed a boom in the production of copies of the works of Vergil, chief among them the *Aeneid*, the epic poem that tells of Aeneas's voyage to Italy and arrival there, although the scholarly Asterius, who was consul in 494, had been distracted from his work on the text of another of Vergil's works, the *Eclogues*, by holding the consular games. Perhaps such feelings were aided by a feeling of nostalgia produced by the end of the line of emperors in 476, but they were unmistakably powerful.¹⁰⁴

Although Leo's attempt to replace the discordant figures of Romulus and Remus by the apostles Peter and Paul was an imaginative gesture, it gained little traction. It is all too easy to interpret the authority of the popes within Rome as the fifth century progressed in the light of the assured position they

would come to occupy later, but their later standing was by no means inevitable. Indeed, the church itself was a divided body, for the pope who succeeded Gelasius, **Anastasius (24 November 496–19 November 498)**, another son of a Roman priest, had to deal with a schism. Many clergy and priests withdrew from communion with him, on the grounds that he had failed to maintain the hard line Felix and Gelasius had maintained against Acacius, the patriarch of Constantinople. Anastasius certainly made enemies, among them the author of the short and remarkably unenthusiastic account of him in the *Liber Pontificalis*, according to which he was struck down by the will of God.¹⁰⁵ But the significance of his time as pope emerges more clearly in the light of evidence we have for his successor, so discussion of it is best postponed. The following period would be one of unparalleled turbulence for the Roman church, during which powerful elements among the laity exerted an influence they never would again.

Appendix: The Number of the Titular Churches

Most people who went to church in Rome in this period would have attended one of the titular churches, whose functions would have resembled those of modern parish churches. It is not clear how many of them there were, but a number of pieces of indirect evidence are suggestive. The *Liber Pontificalis* represents pope Cletus (c85) as having ordained 25 priests in the city of Rome, having been ordered to do so by S Peter; pope Evastrius as giving these priests titular functions at the beginning of the second century; pope Urban as distributing 25 patens early in the third century; and pope Marcellus (306–308) as establishing 25 titular churches in Rome that would be used for functions that are not entirely clear, these being described as baptism, the repentance of converts from paganism, and the tombs of the martyrs. Marcellus is also credited with ordaining 25 priests, just as Cletus had; perhaps he was thought to have presided over a fresh start for the church after a period of savage persecution, and so had to ordain a full complement of priests. However, this would have been based on a faulty understanding, for in the middle of the third century the church already had 43 priests. Whereas such information is scarcely to be taken literally, the insistence on the number 25 suggests that when this portion of the *Liber Pontificalis* was produced in about the 530s, there were this many titular churches, and evidence from the seventh century points to their having been no more than 25 such churches then.¹⁰⁶

However, there is an unwelcome complication, for we possess lists of priests who attended two synods held in Rome, one at the end of the fifth century and the other at the end of the sixth, each of them identified by the church in which he served, on the basis of which scholars often estimate that 29, or perhaps 28, titular churches were functioning in about 500. But the evidence is very hard to argue from. It is not the case that the list of churches represented at the earlier synod consists of those named in 595 with the addition of four, as has sometimes been believed, for there are a number of churches apparently unique to each synod. Many of the names of churches that occur in the earlier list are those of people not known to have been saints, and we may take them to have been those of the laypeople who founded them; we shall later have occasion to note how many of these names are those of women. However, the names unique to the later list can easily be identified with those of saints. It may well be that, with the passing of time, the founders of the churches were being forgotten, and their names were being replaced by those of saints, perhaps those whose relics the churches housed. Given that the slippery nature of the evidence that may lead us to believe that there were more than 25 titular churches, we may accept the implication of the *Liber Pontificalis* that this was indeed their number.¹⁰⁷

Notes

- 1 Capitol: Cassiodorus, *var*, 7.6.1. Legislation: *cod theod*, 15.1.19 (of 376), 15.1.27 (of 390); *nov marj*, 4 (of 458; contained in *cod theod*.) Observer: Cassiodorus, *var*, 11.39.1f.
- 2 Celestine: *LP*, 45.2. Sixtus: *LP*, 46.4, with 34.9f. Repairs: *cod theod*, *nov val*, 5.3.
- 3 Procopius, *Wars*, 3.5. 1–4, 4.9.5; *LP* 47.6. Eyewitness: Prosper, *epit chron*, 1375 (*MGH AA* 9: 484). Pope: *LP*, 47.6. Very well known: Jordanes, *get*, 168 (*MGH AA* 5: 102).
- 4 *LP*, 34. 9–27, with the treatments of Reekmans (1989): 865f and Bran-denbergh (2005). Arguments against Constantine's having been responsible for S Peter's have been adduced by Bowersock (2005), but Liverani (2008) contains evidence that he was regarded as having founded it in the middle of the fifth century; moreover, it would have been unusual for popes to have sought to trace their authority to Constantine. Discovery of Cross: *LP*, 32.2. Size: Augustine, *civ dei*, 1.1, 7; 2.2 (*CCSL* 47: 1, 6, 35.)
- 5 Constantine: Marazzi (1998): 43–7 (but the figure for S Paul's may be inflated, p. 44 n. 45). End of century: Augustine, *ep*. 29.10 (*PL* 33: 119). Hilary: *LP*, 48.2–11, although the order in which the churches are listed makes S Peter's follow immediately behind the Lateran; it would be interesting to know why one version of the text lists, in summary fashion, S Peter's, S Paul's, the Lateran, S Laurence's, and S Mary's (ed. Mommsen, p. 107).
- 6 The dative case is used for church foundations at *LP*, 34.16, 21, 24, 26, although the genitive is used in the case of a church allegedly built at the request of his daughter, and others out

- of Rome: *LP*, 34.23, 28–31. Donations to S Peter: *LP*, 54.10, 58.2. Kings as supplicants: Ambrose, *in luc*, 10.12 (CCSL 14: 349). Emperors: Socrates, *HE*, 1.40. Augustine, *Vingt-six sermons*, ed. Dolbeau, p. 266, probably referring to a visit of Honorius in 404; see further *in psalm*, 140.21 (CCSL 40: 2042). Augustine elsewhere mentions *principes* visiting the memorial of the fisherman, *ibid.* 86.8 (CCSL 39: 1205). John Chrysostom: *con iud et gent*, 9 (PG 48: 825), *hom in 2 Cor*, 26.53 (PG 41: 582). Theoderic: below, p. 52f. Totila: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.20.22.
- 7 Helena: *LP*, 34.26. De Blaauw (1994a): 503f discusses mass at S Peter's. Lists: see esp. *MGH AA* 12: 410–15.
- 8 See the different emphases of Krautheimer (2000): 29–31 and Reekmans (1989): 873f.
- 9 On titular churches, Reekmans (1989): 867f; Sessa (2012): 231–35. Deliberate plan: Brandenburg (2005): 250. For the number 25, see below, p. 43f. The *LP* assumes ordinations were conducted in December until the time of Simplicius (*LP*, 49.5).
- 10 *Antike und Christentum*.
- 11 African: *Non enim respublica est in ecclesia sed ecclesia in respublica, id est in imperio Romano* (Optatus of Milevis, *con don Parm*, 3.3 (*PL* 11: 999)). Italian: *Imperator enim intra ecclesia, non supra ecclesia est* (Ambrose of Milan, *serm con Aux*, 36 (*PL* 16: 1018)).
- 12 *De Civitate Dei*, 19.17 (CCSL 47: 685), trans. Henry Bettenson.
- 13 No need: *serm.* 105.9 (*PL* 38: 623). In drawing on material from the end of the republic, Augustine's practice was similar to that of the grammarian Donatus.
- 14 Bodies: Augustine, *serm* 295.5 (*PL* 38 1355). City of God: Augustine, *retract*, 2.69. Ambrose: *de fide*, 2.16.136–43. Leo: ep. 83.3 Nestorius: Socrates, *HE*, 7.29.5.
- 15 Widespread adoption: Galvao-Sobrinho (1995): 33. Jerome: ep. 107.1. Augustine: *in psalm*, 44.23 (CCSL 38: 511). Capacity of vessels: *LP*, 34.10, with comments by Davis, p. 115f. Eucharist: Leo, ep. 9.2.
- 16 Inscription: Brandenburg (2005): 178. *Plebs*: *LP*, 63.4, 61.3, 62.2. Pelagius II is represented as offering gifts to God with the faithful *plebs*: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 310 n. 3. Epitaphs: *ICUR*, ns. 2, 4148 (Leo I, but installed in the time of Sergius), 4153 (Boniface II), 4154 (John II), 4156 (Gregory I), 1460 (Deusededit).
- 17 Deposed patriarch: *LP*, 75.3. Aphrodisias: Hadot (2004): 104. Proclus: *Neoplatonic Saints*, pp. 10f, 75, 96, 11. In general, Watts (2006); on Athens, 96–118. Known to Christians: e.g. Eusebius, *HE*, 7.32.6; Sozomen, *HE*, 1.5.1. Eusebius: see especially *HE*, 1.1.1; restated at 8.1.1.
- 18 Baptistry: *LP*, 34.13. Simplicius: *LP*, 49.2. Sixth century: *LP*, 31.2. *LP*, 18.4, could be pressed to indicate a perception that baptising was the prerogative of the bishop.
- 19 Facing east : *ordo rom*, 84.16, 107.8. Practice of *fermentum*: *LP*, 33.2 (Miltiades); 40.2 (Siricius). Innocent I, *capit.* 23.5 (to bishop Decentius of Gubbio; *PL* 56: 516, on which see Willis (1994): 68f.) John the deacon mentions acolytes receiving utensils for carrying the sacrament (*ep ad Sen*, 10, *PL* 59: 405). In general, Diefenbach (2007): 408–13.
- 20 Suburbicarian diocese: Jones (1964): 47, 884. Nicaea: c 6 (ed. Alberigo et al, p. 23); Rufinus, *HE*, 1.6. Its interpretation is clear from the old Latin version: *urbis Romae similis mos est ut in suburbicaria loca sollicitudinem gerat*. Similar language is used by Rufinus in his version of the canons of Nicaea, *HE*, 1.6 (*PL* 21: 473). Rusticus: Turner, *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta* 1/2, p. 148, with p. 151. Cagliari: Gregory I, ep. 4.29.

- 21 Synods: Leo, ep. 16.7 Gregory's letters: Markus (1997): 209. Gregory's appointments: Richards (1980): 144ff, 162ff. Leo's letter: ep. 4.
- 22 The list given by Matthew uses the word *πρώτος* of Peter (Matt 10: 2); the employment of this word is intriguing.
- 23 I Cor 15: 5; the evangelists, however, seem to go out of their way to emphasise that women saw the resurrected Christ before Peter did.
- 24 *Gesta Liberii Papae*, PLS 3: 1390.
- 25 *Ubi Petrus... ibi ecclesia: in psalm*, 40: 30.
- 26 Irenaeus: *adv haer*, 3.2f. Eusebius: *HE*, 3.1 (modern translation: *SChr* 31:98), 5.6. Bede, however, speaks of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, in that order (*chron maior*, 421 (MGH AA 13: 284). John Chrysostom: *in rom*, 32.2 (PG 60: 678). Leo I assumed that Peter had been a bishop as well as an apostle: *tract* 5.4. Peter ordained: Gregory of Tours, *glor mart*, 27. Rufinus: PG 1: 1207. Roman tradition: *LP*: 1–5; the use of the word *consecravit* at 1.5 is unusual.
- 27 Cult: Kennedy (1938): 111–17. Clement: Jerome, *vir ill*, 1.15 (*PL* 23: 631); *CIL* 15: 7192, with *LP*, 4.1. Council: MGH AA 12: 411 f (signats 5f, 24). Read out: Eusebius, *HE*, 3.16.
- 28 Peter and New Testament: *LP*, 1.2. Optatus: *adv parm don*, 2.2f (*PL* 11: 948). Jerome: ep. 15.1. Augustine: *c on pet*, 2.51.118 (*PL* 43: 300).
- 29 Apostolic sees: below, p. 222. Sozomen: *HE*, 1.1.7.2 (Julius could scarcely have been expected to attend, having only become pope in 337). Tours: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 4.11; Venantius Fortunatus, *carm*, 3.3.23f (MGH AA 4: 51). Gregory: ep. 11.6.
- 30 Ambrose, *exc sat*, 1.47; *expl symb*, 4, 7.
- 31 *De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, 4; see the comments of his editor, M. Bévenot (Oxford 1971), p. xivf.
- 32 *Adv. Jov.* 1.26 (*PL* 23: 247).
- 33 *Retractationes*, 1.21 (CCSL 57: 62), citing for the former interpretation a hymn of Ambrose in which Peter is referred to as *petra ecclesiae* (1.15, ed. SAEMO 22: 32); the hymn was well known to Augustine (*conf.* 9.12.32, CCSL 27: 151f). Isidore of Seville believed the rock to have been Christ: *Etymologiae*, 7.9.2.
- 34 Mansi 4: 1296.
- 35 Siricius: Guillot (2004). Isidore: *vir ill*, 3. In general on Leo's correspondence, McShane (1979): 325–41.
- 36 Thessaloniki: Mansi 8: 749ff. Leo confirmed that that the bishop of Thessaloniki was to be his *vicis* in Illyrium: ep. 5, 14 (*PL* 54: 614ff, 666ff). He would consecrate the metropolitans, who would in turn consecrate bishops: ep.6.4 (*PL* 54: 618f). Arles: Zosimus, ep. 1, 4–7, 10f. In general, Rennie (2013): 41–55.
- 37 *V Eut* 15, 26 (PG 86: 2292, 2304).
- 38 *LP*, 47.1; Leo, *tract*, 1.1; Prosper Tiro, *epit. chron.* 1341 (MGH AA 9: 478).
- 39 *Tract.* 82.1–3. Leo later revised his sermon lightly; the summary given here follows the version delivered in 441. Leo's collaborator Prosper describes both Peter and Paul and being sent to Rome, although it is not clear by whom (*epit. chron.* 419, 446; MGH AA: 412f).
- 40 On the *concordia apostolorum*, Pietri (1961). Bishop Gaudentius of Brescia envisaged Peter

- and Paul as having been not only brothers, but twins (*serm* 20, *PL* 20: 996). Words from an epistle: 1 Pet. 2: 9 (also quoted with more general applicability at *tract*. 4.1.) Romulus on *caput orbis terrarum*: Livy 1.1.6.7; note too *caput orbis* (Ovid, *Amores*, 1.15.26). The view of Rome outlived the Roman Empire in the West, Cassiodorus seeing Rome as *mundi caput* (*var*, 9.17.1); note too the biographer of Fulgentius of Ruspe; *V Fulgentii* 13.27 (*PL* 65: 130).
- 41 *Fundata tali sanguine*: hymn 12.23 (ed. Fontaine 1992; the authorship of the hymn is discussed pp. 515–20).
- 42 *Tract* 83; Peter is also seen as participating in Christ's power at *tract* 4.2. The faith of Peter was a theme of Leo's preaching; *tract* 3.2; 51.1f.
- 43 *Tract* 3.3f, 4.2, 2.2; Leo is also Peter's heir at *tract*. 5.4.
- 44 Rival: Eutropius, *Brev.* 10.8 (*MGH AA* 2:174f). Equal: *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* 6.30 (*MGH AA* 9: 10). New Rome: Sozomen, *HE*, 2.3.5 (apparently in apposition to Old Rome, 2.3.4). Second Rome: Socrates, *HE*, 1.16.1.
- 45 Constantius: Ammianus Marcellinus, 16.10.15. Themistius, *orat.* 14 (182a, 184a, ed. G. Downey).
- 46 John Chrysostom, *Con Iud et gent*, 9 (*PG* 48: 825).
- 47 *Hist. Conc. Nic.* 2.27 (*PG* 85: 1312).
- 48 Can. 3, ed. Alberigo et al., p. 66.
- 49 Ambrose: *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.17f (*SAEMO* 16: 66–68). African chronicler: Victor of Tunnunna, e.g. *chron.* 447, 451 (*MGH AA* 11: 184f).
- 50 Ed. Turner (1900): 560. Augustine: *Retractationes*, 2.18 (44), *CCSL* 57: 104.
- 51 *Placidiae pia mens operis decus omne paterni gaudet pontificis studio splendore Leonis* *ICUR* ns 2: 4784. See on this Docci (2006): 56–66. Law: *nov val*, 17 (in *cod theod*).
- 52 Gillett (2001), and Sivan (2011): 137. *Tract.* 36.3 (*CCSL* 138: 197).
- 53 Johnson (2009): Leo: 172.
- 54 The early stages of the controversy can be traced in Leo, ep. 21–24.
- 55 *Tract.* 28.1, 64.4; yet 21.2, 28.3. Mother of God: Barclift (1997).
- 56 Tradition: John Moschus, *prat spir*, 147 (*PG* 87: 3012). Abbot: *V Amati*, 12 (*MGH SRM* 4: 220). Constantinople: Mansi 11: 771.
- 57 Leo, ep. 29–37.
- 58 The council is ed. *ACO*, 2/1/1, 2/3/1. A robbery, not a judgment: ep. 95.2.
- 59 Letters from West: Leo, ep. 55–58. Theodosius replies: Leo, ep. 62–64.
- 60 Leo, ep. 69; similar is ep. 70, to Pulcheria.
- 61 Leo, ep. 76f (Marcian and Pulcheria to Leo), 79 (Leo to Pulcheria), 82f (Leo to Marcian), 89 (Marcian to Leo), 93 (Leo to bishops).
- 62 *Acts of the Council*, 2: 24. The proceedings are edited in *ACO* 2; the legislation is in Alberigo et al., 133–51.
- 63 Ed. Alberigo et al. Christ to be acknowledged: 377–85. Cyril and Leo: lines 323–344. Canon 28: p. 150f.
- 64 *Acts of the Council*, 3: 84–91; Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 1.13 (trans. E. Sewter, p. 62f).

- 65 Site: *propter palatii vicinitatem* (*Collectio Avellana* 9, CSEL 35: 44.8f). High officials: Millar (2004): 197–99.
- 66 Leo, ep. 98 (bishops to Leo), 100 (Marcian to Leo), 101 (Anatolius to Leo), 104–6 (Leo to Marcian, Pulcheria and Anatolius), 114 (Leo to bishops), 127 (Leo's horror). Edict: *Acts of the Council*, 3: 128–30.
- 67 Leo, ep. 144f (Proterius), 156.1 (attend council), 165 (long letter).
- 68 *Acts*, p. 70.
- 69 Leo, ep. 14 (*PL* 54: 676f); with Leo's *connexio totius corporis unam sanitatem, unam pulchritudinem facit* compare Augustine *a corpore videmus non diceremus tam pulchrum quam in illa connexione membrorum* (*gen. ad lit.* 3.24.37; *PL* 34: 296), and more generally *Confessiones* 7.13.20. Cyprian: Bévenot (1961): 88.
- 70 There are sporadic references to Manichaeans in Rome from the early fourth century: *LP*, 33.2, 40.2, 41.1. Leo: *tract* 9.4, 16.4f, 24.5, 34.4; ep. 17; *tract* 42.4f, 89.1. Nothing chaste: *tract* 79.2. Law: *nov val* 18f (printed in *cod theod*). Later popes: *LP*, 51.1, 53.5, 54.9. Oddly enough the *LP* does not mention Leo dealing with Manichaeans.
- 71 Prosper, *epit. chron*, 1367 (*MGH AA* 9: 482) with 1321 (474); *LP*, 47.7. Cassiodorus sees Leo making peace with Attila, having been directed by Valentinian (*chron*, 1256, *MGH AA* 9: 157); Jordanes mentions Leo alone (*get*, 223, *MGH AA* 5: 115). Trygetius: Prosper, *epit*, 1367. Innocent: Zosimus, *hist nouv*, 5.45.5. Eighth century: Paul the deacon, *hist rom*, 14.12 (*MGH AA* 2: 204f).
- 72 Prosper, *epit. chron*, 1375 (*MGH AA* 9: 484), with Victor of Tonnena, *chron*, sa 455 (*MGH AA* 11: 186).
- 73 Leo's burial: *LP*, 47.9, with Picard (1969) and Borgolte (1989: esp. 38–48 on decentralised burials after the peace of the church, and 50 on no caesura.) On the location of the imperial mausoleum, Johnson (2009): 167f. Constantinople: Sozomen, *HE*, 2.34.6. McEvoy (2010: 178–89) connects the imperial mausoleum with papal burials, but the connection may have been closer than she suggests. By the seventh century it was taken for granted that almost all popes were buried near Peter (*CCSL* 175: 315). Merovingians: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 4.1; see further below on the English, p. 232.
- 74 *LP*, 46.9.
- 75 Chapels and other works: *LP*, 48, 2–11, with Mackie (2003): 195–211; Hilary's connection with the Evangelist is discussed in *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 328 n. 42. Boniface I: *LP*, 44.6. Cassiodorus: *var*, 12.20.3.
- 76 *LP*, 74.12. Ravenna: *LPR*, 66.
- 77 Ricimer: Dessau 1294. Gregory mentions the church at ep. 4.19 and *dial*, 3.30; further, *LP*, 66.4. It cannot be accidental that another non-Nicene church dedicated by Gregory for Catholic use, the church of St Severinus, stood nearby (Gregory, ep. 3.19). Mathisen (2009).
- 78 K. Welch tries to rehabilitate the reputation of the district: Steinby (1993+), 4: 378–83; it seems to have been home to a large Jewish congregation (382).
- 79 Brandenburg sees Ricimer as having probably founded the church (2005: 219), as does M. C. Cartocci, in Steinby (1993+), 1: 24. Yet the inscription credits him with adorning the church (*pro voto suo adornavit*) rather than erecting it.
- 80 Ambrose: ep. 20. John: Socrates, *HE*, 6.5.8; Sozomen, *HE*, 8.4.10; Theodoret, *HE*, 5.32. When a

- non-Nicene bishop sought the use of a church from the Catholic bishop in Spoleto in the second half of the sixth century, *valde episcopus negaret* (Gregory, *dial.* 3.29).
- 81 Constantine and Silvester: *LP*, 34.16, 28. Julius: *LP*, 36.2. Sallustius: *coll avel*, 3. Poet: Prudentius, *perist.* 12.47f (*CCSL* 126: 380). Sixtus: *LP*, 46.3, with Brandenburg (2005): 178 on the inscription, *Xystus episcopus plebi dei*.
- 82 *LP*, 49.1. The church is described by Brandenburg (2005): 200–13; see further G. Bartolozzi Casti, in *La Regina* (2001+): 5.106–9. Eudocia: Evagrius, *HE*, 1.22. Demetrias: *LP*, 47.1. Verina: George Codinus, *de aed.* PG 157: 585. The case for the emperor Anthemius having been responsible for the church made by Davis-Weyer (1989) is not strong. Note too two works of pope Hilary, *LP*, 48.12. No priests attached to S Stefano Rotondo were present at councils held in 499 and 595. Churches served: *LP*, 49.2; Justinian, *nov.* 3.1.
- 83 *LP*, 49.1, with *PLRE* 2: 1147 (Valila) and Brandenburg (2005): 218 on S Andrew's. Costambeys sees Sta Bibiana as having been erected on land owned by the state: (2001): 180f.
- 84 Hilary, *De Trinitate*, ed. *CCSL* 62: 9*–33*. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, ed. *CCSL* 50A: 535. Archbishop: Agnellus of Ravenna, *De ratione fidei*, *PL* 68: 381–86, speaking of certain people disturbing the Catholic faith.
- 85 De Clerck, ed., *Prière universelle*, 5 p. 170, with 2 p. 173.
- 86 Henotikon: Evagrius, *HE*, 3.14. Trifolius: *CCSL* 85: 141.103–5. Letters: Jaffé and Wattenbach, 586–89.
- 87 Leo's background: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 253 n.2. Basilus: *MGH AA* 12: 445. *LP*: 50.1.
- 88 Felix's letters are ed. Thiel, pp. 222–77; cf *LP*, 53. Sleepless Monks: Evagrius, *HE*, 3.19.
- 89 In the fifth century Zosimus (417–418), born in Greece, Hilary, born in Sardinia, and Symmachus, another Sardinian, were the only other popes from beyond mainland Italy. Gelasius's father was named Valerius; could he have been the man of this name who received letters from Augustine in which he was praised for his conjugal modesty? (ep. 200, 206; Augustine dedicated his *De Nuptiis et concupiscentia* to him, *PL* 44: 413f, 437f).
- 90 Jerome: *Omnium paene iudicio dignus summo sacerdotio decernebar; beatæ memoriæ Damasi os meus sermo esset*: ep. 45.3. Prosper: Gennadius, *vir ill.* 84 (*PL* 58: 1108), with Chavasse, *CCSL* 138: cliif.
- 91 *Liber Pontificalis*, p. 255.13–15. The phrase *in modum beati Ambrosii* is ambiguous but the author of a similar account of Gelasius's writing that occurs in Gennadius uses the expression *in similitudinem*, which suggests correspondence of style rather than metre. The relationship between the lists in the *Liber Pontificalis* and Gennadius is unclear.
- 92 *Ep.* 12 (ed Thiel), addressed *Gelasius episcopus ad Anastasius augustus*. The key words are *Duo quippe sunt, imperator auguste, quibus principaliter mundus hic regitur, auctoritas sacra pontificum et regalis potestas*.
- 93 John Chrysostom: *De S Babyla*, PG 50: 547, trans. M. A. Schatkin, Washington, DC, p. 104.
- 94 *Collectio Avellana* 103.30 (*CSEL* 35: 487), with which compare the much repeated *Exaudi Christe. Augustino vita.* (Augustine, *ep.* 213.2, *PL* 33: 967).
- 95 Ed. Dobschütz (1912). Acacius is the last author to be mentioned.
- 96 *LP*, 51.1. Similarly, pope Symmachus would burn the 'simulacra' and books of the Manichaeans before Lateran and send them into exile (*LP*, 53.5; unlike Duchesne (p. 265 n.

- 14), I do not see Symmachus as responding to an accusation made by an emperor), while Hormisdas would try them with blows, send them into exile, and burn their books before the same church (*LP*, 54.9; it is not clear why Gelasius performed this act before S Mary's.) Thereafter they do not seem to have been a problem.
- 97 Livy, 40.29. In 435 the public burning of Nestorian books was legislated (*cod. theod.* 16.5.66, reproduced in *cod. iust.* 1.5.6.) Claimant: Evagrius, *HE*, 3.4. Reccared: Fredegar, *chron.* 4.8.
- 98 *Cod theod* 9.16.12, of 409.
- 99 *Cod theod* 16.10.10–12.
- 100 Tract and prayers ed. *SChr* 65; tract in *coll avel*, 100. Illuminating discussion by McLynn (2008).
- 101 Tjäder, 10f; Thiel p. 346.
- 102 *LP*, 53.5, 54.9 (on the latter occasion, blows were struck.)
- 103 Lupercal: Coarelli, in Steinby (1993+) 3: 198f. Younger Symmachus: *CCSL* 96: v. Gelasius: *coll avel*, 100.12. Coins: Grierson and Blackburn (1986): 32.
- 104 Treasures: Procopius, *Wars*, 8.22.5–22. Asterius: *PLRE* 2: 173f.
- 105 *LP*, 52.
- 106 Early popes: *LP*, 3.2, 6.2, 18.2, 31.2, 6. 43 priests: Eusebius, *HE*, 6.43. Seventh century: Morin (1911): 325f.
- 107 See in particular T. Mommsen, in *MGH AA* 12: 508, with whom compare e.g. Guidobaldi, in Pani Ermini (2000): 127f, and Schäfer (1991): 214 n. 17.

The competition for power that is universal among human societies sometimes led to there being two people claiming to be bishop of Rome at the same time. In the early centuries, such a situation tended to reflect controversies within the church. Disagreement as to how to deal with Christians who had wavered in time of persecution lay behind two disputed elections in the third century, and in both cases the party advocating a gentler policy prevailed, although the leaders of the rigorists, Hippolytos and Novatian, were to be better remembered; the Christian church has often found it difficult to steer between being overly accommodating to secular culture on the one hand and self-righteous on the other. Midway through the fourth century a schism broke out between two rivals who adopted different attitudes to the teachings of the council of Nicaea. Some years later, thugs hired by another contender for the post of pope, Damasus, killed 137 supporters of his rival in the cathedral. The growing strength of the church meant that disputes were coming to reflect more than different ideological views, for the position of bishop of Rome had become important enough to make it a desirable one, so that someone described as a worshipper of idols was said to have jokingly commented to Damasus, ‘make me bishop of Rome and I will immediately be a Christian!’ A dispute that broke out in 418 between two claimants for the position, Boniface and Eulalius, came to the attention of the prefect of the city and subsequently the emperor Honorius, who finally decided in favour of Boniface, leaving Eulalius to join the list of those who are often described by a word coined in the twelfth century, ‘antipopes’. To ensure that such disputes did not occur again, the emperor later decreed that if two men were ordained when Boniface died, neither was to become bishop, and that only someone from among the clergy whom the judgment of God and universal agreement elected was to be ordained. The later history of the church of Rome would have been a lot quieter had this principle been adhered to.¹

Whatever grounds of conviction or ambition may have lain behind contested elections, the creaky mechanism by which bishops were chosen in late antiquity could easily be manipulated. Different letters of pope Leo

mention disparate groups playing a role in the selection of bishops, for the citizens, the people, the respectable people, the clergy, the senior people, and the populace are all said to have had a voice. When the position of bishop became vacant in Châlons-sur-Saône in the fifth century, there were three contenders: one a man of good family but loose morals, another who dished up good meals to win support, and a third who promised to deliver the estates of the church to his backers. The decision fell to a visiting bishop, who not surprisingly looked elsewhere and chose the archdeacon. In Bourges, two rows of seats could not accommodate those wishing to become bishop. The people placed the choice in the hands of the priests, but they were bitterly divided, and again the decision fell to an outsider.² In such cases, neighbouring and metropolitan bishops had a role to play, but the status of the Roman church excluded them from being involved in the election of popes. Sometimes a pope would nominate his successor, but such an act never seems to have had binding force, and could be contested. To make matters worse, the decision as to who would be pope was generally made in a hurry, for during the second half of the fifth century every pope but one was ordained on the Sunday following the death of his predecessor. But one chronicler saw the orderly nature of transitions from one pope to another in the fifth century as deserving of comment, suggesting that problems occurred more frequently than our sources indicate.³

The fifth century was indeed a placid period, compared to that which followed. Of the 10 popes who assumed office in the period of just over half a century that began in 498, at least half owed their appointment or their ability to continue in office to a secular authority, and two had to deal with rivals who claimed to be pope. One was ordained two and a half months after the death of his predecessor, and another after an interval of nearly two months, by far the longest vacancies since the last great persecution of Christians had ended early in the fourth century. The only ordination of a pope on a day other than Sunday in the ancient world occurred during this period, which also witnessed the production of polemical writing on an unprecedented scale. Such controversies were the visible signs of deep tensions within the church, and they are illuminated by a body of sources that is wider than for any other period we shall examine. They are therefore worth detailed examination.

On the third day after the death of pope Anastasius, two men were elected to the office. The rivals had very different backgrounds, for the deacon **Symmachus (22 November 498–19 July 514)** was an outsider who had been born in Sardinia and only become a Catholic after arriving in Rome, perhaps after Vandals gained control of the island at some time between 455 and 468, whereas his opponent Laurentius, who held the office of archpriest, would have been one of the senior members of the clergy, with a long career behind

him. It was reasonable for Laurentius to be compared to the biblical figure of Esau, and Symmachus to his younger brother Jacob.⁴ Symmachus was ordained in the cathedral and Laurentius in the basilica of Sta Maria Maggiore; we are not told who the ordaining bishops were. Perhaps thinking of the events of 418, the two parties went to Ravenna, where the king, although he was not a Catholic, would arbitrate. According to a source favourable to Symmachus, Theoderic decided that the one who had been ordained first and who enjoyed the greater support was to occupy the apostolic see, and not surprisingly, given that he had been ordained in the cathedral, this turned out to be Symmachus. A source hostile to him, however, attributes the outcome to bribery. On 1 March 499 bishops from the suburbicarian churches and the priests and deacons of the Roman church met in synod in S Peter's basilica. It was unusually early in the year for such a meeting, and the bishops were thanked for having come in spite of the winter cold. The proceedings were begun by the archdeacon Fulgentius, who invited Symmachus to speak. The pope mentioned the difficulties that had recently been created by unlawful canvassing for the position of bishop and popular disturbances, which he attributed to the intervention of the Devil. A secretary read out a series of decrees: There would in future be no canvassing for office, and should a pope die without having decided who would succeed him, the ecclesiastical body would select a person (in the case of disputes, the opinion of the majority would prevail). Anyone who reported on cabals would not only be free of guilt, but be paid a fitting sum. Such a declaration of the independence of the clergy flew in the face of Leo's assumption that other groups would participate in an election. But the members of the council, entirely made up of clergy, were buoyant, its participants four times bursting into a series of acclamations, crying out such slogans as 'Hear, O Christ! Life to Symmachus!' Such chants were common in the synods of the period, and as we have seen at the end of a synod held just four years earlier in Rome all the bishops and priests had risen from their seats and cried out repeatedly, 'Hear, O Christ, life to Gelasius!' But in 499 a political element was added, when the entire synod rose to its feet and acknowledged the support Symmachus had received from the state by crying out 30 times, 'Hear, O Christ! To Theoderic, life!' After the synod Symmachus despatched Laurentius to become bishop of Nucera, an upland town in Campania where he would be much more out of the way than Damasus's defeated rival Ursinus had been when he was appointed bishop of Naples. Peace having been restored to the church, the pope's dignity was publicly displayed when Theoderic came to Rome in 500. Enormous throngs turned out for such events, and when the emperor Honorius visited the city on the occasion of a consulship, the crowd extended from the Palatine Hill to the Milvian bridge, men standing on the ground and women on the housetops. The

protocol of Theoderic's visit largely followed tradition, for in visiting the senate, addressing the people, entering the Palace, and providing games he imitated what the emperor Constantius had done when he visited the city in 357. But something was different: On the arrival of Theoderic, no more of an orthodox Christian than Constantius had been, the pope, together with the entire senate and Roman people, joyfully met him outside its walls. Symmachus would have had every reason to believe that his position, both within the city and vis-à-vis the secular authority, was secure.⁵

But this was not to be the case. Before long various enemies, who included clergy and senators, brought a number of charges against Symmachus before the king. He was said to have celebrated Easter apart from the rest of the church, to have consorted with women, among them a prostitute beguilingly nicknamed Spicy, and to have squandered the property of the church, contrary to the decrees of his predecessors. Such charges were staples of ecclesiastical polemic. Disputes as to the correct date on which Easter was to be observed had been ongoing since the second century. Clergy were sometimes vulnerable to sexual temptation, and Symmachus himself issued a decretal, preserved in a later collection of canon law, concerning those who among them violated their spiritual daughters. The controversial Damasus had been accused of adultery by two of his deacons, and oddly enough throngs of worldly women were said to have been among Symmachus's supporters. And the last charge was by no means novel, for people wishing to be pope, no less than aspirants for the post of bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône, could use the assets of the church to buy support. Theoderic summoned Symmachus to Ravenna give an account of himself, but while he was on his way he saw the women with whom he had been accused of sinning. Convinced that he was being set up, he fled back to Rome, where he took up residence in S Peter's. The supporters of Laurentius then invited their candidate back to Rome, and battles between their adherents broke out on the streets. Violence was never far away in the cities of late antiquity, and Rome in particular was known as a place where discussions of events easily turned to quarrels that broke out in taverns, and similar despicable things. Many priests were said to have been killed amid scenes of slaughter, although only two are named, it being specified that they were killed with clubs and sword.⁶ The dispute was now threatening public order, and Theoderic ordered the bishops of the different provinces to meet in Rome to sort matters out.

So it was that 76 bishops came together, but the synod that met was of a different kind to that of 499. The bishops convened not in S Peter's but, after a time in another basilica, in the church of Sta Croce, at the easternmost edge of the city. The final choice of a meeting place was significant, for Sta Croce, also known as the basilica Sessoriana, stood outside the network of churches served

by clergy under the pope. Since Constantine had formed it by adapting a hall within an imperial residence, it had remained under the control of the state, and had recently witnessed an unnerving scene, for while in Rome in 500 Theoderic had ordered that the head of one of his enemies was to be chopped off in the palace complex of which the church formed a part. Moreover, the bishops were drawn from a wider area than those who had met under Symmachus. A letter Theoderic sent to them was addressed in the first place to the bishops of Milan, Aquileia, and Ravenna, the three Italian bishops who shared with the pope the distinction of being metropolitans. The bishops of Milan and Aquileia enjoyed the privilege of ordaining each other, and it had been to them that John Chrysostom had sent copies of his correspondence with pope Innocent 100 years earlier, whereas pope Leo's *bête noire*, the archimandrite Eutyches, had written to bishop Peter of Ravenna, only to be fobbed off with a recommendation that he read Leo's writings.⁷ A number of other bishops from the north attended the synod, which was clearly seen as one of the whole of Italy, rather than its southern and central parts, its membership being defined in terms that made political rather than ecclesiastical sense. But when Symmachus attempted to make the long journey across the city from S Peter's, where he was based, to appear before the synod there were ugly scenes in which javelins were thrown, and he was forced to turn back. Thereafter he refused to submit himself to the judgment of the bishops, who duly asked the king for permission to return to their homes. This was denied, and finally, two and a half months after Theoderic had first written to them, the bishops passed the buck: The judgment of Symmachus would be left to God. Nevertheless, they decreed that those clergy who had separated themselves from him were, if they asked for pardon, to be restored to their posts, whereas those who presumed to celebrate mass without his knowledge would be in a state of schism. The first two bishops to sign its proceedings were those of Milan and Ravenna; the bishop of Aquileia had disappeared.⁸

Although the decision was a setback to Symmachus's enemies, one of whom went so far as to produce a pamphlet entitled *Against the Synod of the Incongruous Absolution*, they carried on as though nothing had happened. At the request of two of their leaders, the senators Festus and Probinus, Theoderic appointed bishop Peter of Altino to be visitor of the Roman church. This was a slap in the face for Symmachus, for a visitor was a bishop entrusted with overseeing the affairs of a church at a time when it did not have a bishop of its own. In particular, Peter would preside at the celebration of Easter, probably in 502. This was the most solemn occasion of the church's year. It was a busy time for bishops, and at the end of the century one who was tied up with the festivities that accompanied it had to defer a complex piece of administration.

They were expected to observe it in their cathedrals, and baptisms in the neighbouring baptisteries were at the forefront of the celebrations. Just a few years earlier, Gelasius had decreed that unless someone was in danger of dying, baptisms were only to take place at Easter and Pentecost. Symmachus, who would have expected to display his dignity as the bishop of a unified church most fully as he presided over the Easter baptisms, would have felt the appointment of an outsider to discharge this function keenly.⁹

But he fought back. It was probably towards the end of 502 that he gathered his supporters in a third synod, which convened at S Peter's, a site under his control. Before them he expressed his regret that a love of domination had possessed the clergy, causing them to reject the yoke of discipline. His enemies had drawn attention to a meeting that had been held in the imperial mausoleum at S Peter's, at which the praetorian prefect and prefect Basilius, almost certainly to be identified with the western consul of 483, acting on behalf of king Odovacer, had spoken of a formal instruction pope Simplicius had issued concerning the election of a bishop, perhaps when he was dying. According to this text, were it to happen that Simplicius passed from this light, no election was to take place without the secular authorities being consulted, a procedure that went against the role assigned to the clergy by the synod of 499. Moreover, the document continued, church property, whether in the country or the city, was not to be alienated, for it would be wicked and sacrilegious were things which had been left in the hope of salvation or for the repose of souls to be disposed of; however, gems, gold, silver, and items of clothing could be sold for a fair price and the proceeds spent. As the document was being read out by the deacon Hormisdas, a number of bishops interjected, asserting that in issuing this document laypeople, however religious they may have been, had acted without receiving the approval of the pope. The edict was repealed, but the council concluded with an address by Symmachus that laid down the principle that no bishop of Rome would be allowed to transfer any property the church owned in the country or houses in towns to the ownership of someone else. The matter was of such general applicability that a few decades later another pope quoted Symmachus's words when writing to a bishop in Gaul.¹⁰

A casual reader of the proceedings of this synod would conclude that Symmachus had by then triumphed over his enemies. It was attended by 80 bishops, slightly more than those who had attended the earlier synods. Among them the bishops of Milan, Ravenna, and Syracuse were to the fore, and their ranks included the man who had replaced Laurentius as bishop of Nucera. But it was a sign of weakness that only 65 of the 80 who had been present signed its proceedings, and there was still no sign of the bishop of Aquileia. More significantly, the 36 priests and four deacons of Rome present at the council fell

far short of the 74 priests and seven deacons who had attended that held in 499, and the absentees included the archdeacon Fulgentius, who had played a prominent role in the earlier synod. Moreover, only two of the four deacons present in 502 had attended in 499, for the other two had been ordained subsequently, and the names of only 30 of the 74 priests present in 499 recur in the proceedings of the final synod. Some clergy had died in the course of fighting in the streets, but such deaths as there had been could only account for a small part of the diminished attendance, which must in the main have been caused by many of the city's clergy taking the side of Laurentius. The cause of Symmachus suffered another blow when Laurentius, who had been living in Ravenna, where he had presumably enjoyed the goodwill of the government, returned to Rome and reestablished himself at the Lateran. His authority extended widely, for a series of portraits of popes placed above the arches of the central nave in S Paul's that could still be seen in modern times included one of Laurentius, not Symmachus.¹¹

Another sign of weakness in Symmachus's position was his chronic shortage of money, a sign of which was that three chapels he built at S Peter's were embellished less expensively than corresponding ones Hilary had established at the Lateran a few decades earlier. His ally the bishop of Milan loaned him the tidy sum of 400 solidi for what were obliquely referred to as necessary expenses at Ravenna, and understandably became agitated as the pope neglected to settle the debt. Doubtless there was a fine line between paying to obtain access to officials and paying to influence a decision, but the author from whose correspondence we learn of these expenses can scarcely be believed when he claimed in another work that Theoderic's court was free of bribery. Symmachus resorted to accepting money to perform ordinations. Enemies darkly accused him of prostituting the church in this fashion, and there is every reason to accept the charge; for the 96 priests and, more remarkably, the 16 deacons he is known to have ordained during his 16 years as pope, the great majority of them apparently after the third synod, were certainly beyond the requirements of the church, for the three preceding popes had only found it necessary to ordain 70 priests and seven deacons across the 15 years in which they held office. Such was the surfeit of deacons Symmachus left behind that his successor, pope Hormisdas, did not ordain a single one during his nine years as pope. The church's treasury and its income may well have been in the hands of his enemies while Laurentius occupied the Lateran, so causing Symmachus to be short of money, but his expenses were also an issue, for it is possible that, in addition to distributing money among officials at the court, he found disbursements useful in gaining support on the streets from the Roman people. The accommodation for the poor Symmachus built near the churches of St Peter, St Paul, and St Laurence may have been a gesture directed

towards his clients as much as visitors to the city; the possibility that they would receive largesse from a bishop made the needy another group within the city with an interest in who was appointed its bishop. Doubtless one could interpret apparent generosity in an overly cynical way. Almsgiving had been a major theme in the preaching of Leo, and was to generate an extraordinarily powerful passage in a sermon of Gregory the Great preached—appropriately enough in the basilica of S Laurence, a martyr famed for having considered the needy to be the treasure of the church—on the parable Jesus told of Lazarus and the rich man. Whatever faults he may have had, Symmachus's beneficence to the poor may have been that of a Christian rather than a politician. But just as the organizers of the Lupercalia had left their performance to people of low status, it may be that the supporters of Laurentius, who included many senators, had the populace do their dirty work in street fighting, in which case Symmachus may have found it necessary to spend money in response. And the statement in one version of the *Liber Pontificalis* that he tripled the gift to the priesthood and the clothing and food given to the needy sounds like someone trying to buy support.¹²

Whatever Symmachus did to obtain support finally paid off. In 506 or 507 he sent Dioscorus, a deacon of Alexandrian origin, to Theoderic, complaining in particular of Laurentius's holding the titular churches. The king agreed that things were not as they should have been, and told the patrician Festus, Laurentius's great supporter, to restore the churches to Symmachus. He also ordered that there was to be one bishop in the city, whereupon the defeated Laurentius retired to Festus's states. Not all of Symmachus's opponents were reconciled, for at the end of the century people still remembered that a respected deacon, Paschasius, placing friendship above what the bishops had decided, had refused to abandon his allegiance to Laurentius, a decision for which he was punished after death. The succeeding pope would bring the clergy into union, but a formal end of schism would not be enough to bring the church to a state of tranquillity, and before long controversies would return.¹³

The passions generated by the schism produced polemical writing on a scale the Roman church had never known. The account of Symmachus provided in the *Liber Pontificalis* is the longest for any pope between the early fourth and the late seventh century, and whereas its detail makes it a tempting potential source of information, its application of the adjective 'blessed' three times to Symmachus shows where its loyalties lay, and it is largely a piece of propaganda.¹⁴ For their part, those who had supported Laurentius produced an account, only a little shorter, that was biased in the opposite direction. The work *Against the Synod of the Incongruous Absolution*, written by a supporter of Laurentius, no longer survives, but its arguments can be constructed from quotations contained in a most intemperate refutation of it produced by

Ennodius, a deacon of the church of Milan; as so often in the history of the church, the arguments advanced by a losing side only survive within works designed to refute them. Ennodius, who described his opponents as slaves of hell who were obviously servants of Satan, made no attempt to hide his animosities. His work was crafted so that it concluded with speeches given by the founding saints of the city's church, Peter, Paul (tactfully, the only one of his epistles Ennodius represents the apostle as quoting from is that he wrote to the Romans), and a very different figure, that of Rome herself. People on both sides set themselves to write stories of the passions of early saints that served as tracts for the times. From the Laurentian side came accounts of the virtuous enemies of pope Liberius, who had co-operated with an heretical emperor, and the Praxidis after whom the church where Laurentius had been priest was named; the supporters of Symmachus produced a text showing the martyred deacon Laurence as having been not only generous to the poor but submissive to the pope.¹⁵ A document was written that told of pope Sixtus III being accused of having sex with a nun. The emperor Valentinian III called a trial in the Basilica Sessoriana, the very place where the bishops who were to judge Symmachus came together, but when a former consul declared that the pontiff could not be judged, proceedings came to a halt.¹⁶ One text draws out an implication of the conduct of the synod that refused to convict Symmachus that would later be important in the self-definition of the Roman church—'the first see is judged by no-one'—whereas another describes pope Liberius, exiled from his cathedral in the reign of the heretical emperor who had entered Rome with such style in 357, baptising 4,200 people at the Ostrian cemetery, the very place where S Peter himself had baptised one Easter, and another 8,800 the following Pentecost at S Peter's.¹⁷ These astonishingly diverse works of fiction indicate that the issues those arose during the schism were widely discussed and subjects of fierce controversy. Indeed, it is tempting to go further, and argue for issues having been important during the schism simply because they are mentioned in such forged texts, but such an approach would run the risk of underestimating the pleasure their authors took in writing fiction.

What can have triggered such deep feelings? Symmachus and Laurentius had inherited a divided church, for many among the clergy had withdrawn from communion with pope Anastasius, after he entered into communion with a deacon who was said to have been in communion with the condemned former bishop of Constantinople, Acacius. Indeed, Anastasius was said to have wished to restore Acacius. This would have been impossible, for Acacius had died some years before Anastasius became pope, but he was clearly prepared to overturn the policy of the popes who preceded him. His enemies noted with approval, however, that he was struck down by divine will. According to the account of Symmachus written by a supporter of Laurentius, Anastasius wrote

to the emperor that it was pointless that the evil schism between the churches of the East and Italy had lasted for so long. As it happened, at that time Festus, the most senior among the former consuls, had been sent by king Theoderic on state business to Constantinople, where he boasted that he would obtain approval of the Henotikon from the pope. Moreover, while in the royal city Festus had been in touch with representatives of the church of Alexandria. On returning to Rome he found that Anastasius had died and, having corrupted many people with money, he is said to have brought about the election of Laurentius. The story entails Festus having arrived in Rome immediately after the death of Anastasius and then working very quickly, given that the see was only vacant for a few days. But Laurentius seems to have stood in his shadow, for it was through Festus that Theoderic acted when he ordered the termination of the schism. Together with another senator, Probinus, Festus plays a sinister role in the narrative of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which makes it plain that most members of the senate supported Laurentius. Its plaintive assertion that only one of the senators, Faustus, fought on behalf of the church is reflected in an extraordinary etymology contained in one of the texts forged on behalf of Symmachus, according to which one of the words for senate was derived from the word used to describe blood flowing from a wound. Seen in these terms, the schism in the time of Symmachus merely prolonged that which had developed when many of the clergy and priests withdrew from communion with Anastasius. Symmachus maintained the line of those who had separated from his communion on the grounds of his seeking accommodation with the East, whereas Laurentius represented those who sought better relations, his patron Festus having already aligned himself with the policy of Anastasius.¹⁸

It is therefore not to be wondered at that relations between Symmachus and the emperor of the time, who also bore the name Anastasius, were cool. The emperor accused the pope of having been illegally ordained and a Manichaean, an extraordinary charge given that Symmachus was among the popes who took stern measures against Manichaeans who were discovered in Rome. Writing to the emperor after 506, Symmachus made it clear that emperors were to keep their distance from church affairs. Comparing the honour pertaining to an emperor with that of a pontiff, he asserted that the difference between them was as great as that between one who took care of human things and one who took care of divine things. The emperor received baptism from a bishop, took the sacraments from him, asked him for prayer, hoped for his blessing, and sought penitence from him; therefore, if the bishop were not superior in honour, he was certainly equal. Symmachus's hostility towards the emperor was evident in the style he adopted. Just as British monarchs are addressed by an abstract noun describing a quality associated with them, 'Your Majesty',

there was a formal way of addressing emperors, which Leo adopted when he used the term 'Your Clemency'. Another way in which popes addressed emperors was adopted when Felix and Gelasius used the more pastoral term, 'my son'. But Symmachus, throwing caution to the winds, bluntly addressed his imperial correspondent as 'emperor', and memorably advised him to remember that that he was no more than a man. The last phrase was that traditionally whispered to an emperor enjoying a triumph, warning him of his inescapable death.¹⁹

In the midst of his troubled years as pope, Symmachus broke important new ground. He became the first pope to live at S Peter's, where he set about enhancing the dignity of the basilica and its surroundings. Near it he built another basilica, dedicated to S Andrew. Whereas Andrew was not thought to have been directly connected with Rome, the dedication was fitting, given that he had been the brother of Peter, a dignity reflected in the list of martyrs commemorated in the Roman mass, in which Andrew comes third, immediately behind Peter and Paul. Near the font within S Peter's, Symmachus built chapels in honour of the Holy Cross, John the Evangelist, and John the Baptist, dedications that replicated those Hilary had given to the chapels he erected in the baptistery attached to the Lateran, and whereas we cannot date the various works he undertook to periods within Symmachus's time as pope, it is possible that he developed S Peter's so as to rival the cathedral when the Lateran was in the hands of Laurentius. He also embellished S Peter's with marble, fountains, staircases, and mosaics, installing what are described as things appropriate to a bishop's residence; no less than Hilary had when he built a residence near S Laurence's, Symmachus expected to live with a degree of style. He also undertook building projects elsewhere, among them a church dedicated to S Silvester and S Martin, on the site of what is now the church of S Martino ai Monti, where frescoes that seem to have been placed there during his period have been discovered. We learn from a source hostile to Symmachus that the church was paid for by a layman, at whose request he dedicated it. Not surprisingly, Symmachus chose to be buried in S Peter's. In the ninth century his epitaph, as well as those of Leo, Simplicius, and Gelasius, could still be seen there, in an area where Gregory I would later be buried. Whereas the decision of Symmachus to relocate to S Peter's was a response to unforeseen circumstances, it pointed towards the enhanced role that the basilica and the complex that was developing around it would play later.²⁰

The background of **Hormisdas (20 July 514–6 August 523)** is better known than that of most popes of the period. He was a well-born and wealthy man from Frosinone; that the name of the pope the small town produced was of Persian origin is a minor mystery. He was also a married man, the father of a

boy named Silverius. By the early sixth century he had made his way to Rome, for reasons we do not know, and was among the deacons who attended the synod Symmachus held in 502. In the West deacons were celibate, so Hormisdas will by then have become a widower, or agreed with his wife that they would live separately. As he had not been among the deacons present at the council of 499, his ordination will still have been recent in 502, and although Hormisdas was third in rank among the deacons who attended the synod held in that year, his being chosen to read out a document before the large gathering, a task that could be expected to have been discharged by an archdeacon, is a sign that he had quickly become a senior figure. Before long he was being thought of as a future pope. There were good precedents for bishops organising their replacements, for Augustine of Hippo had nominated the man who would succeed him, and the predecessors of two of the best-known Western bishops of this period, Epiphanius of Pavia and Caesarius of Arles, had set them up to follow them. We may assume that Symmachus, acting in accordance with the decree of the synod of 499, had designated Hormisdas as his successor. One may speculate as to whether the rapid rise of an outsider who was known as something of a man of the world as well as a clergyman caused jealousy among his colleagues. But Hormisdas was loved by his son, who wrote his epitaph, one rare among such productions for its personal tone. The author addresses the dead person it commemorates as 'father', names himself, and speaks of his sorrow. 12 years after the death of his father, Silverius would himself become pope.²¹

At the time Hormisdas assumed office the emperor Anastasius was facing a military revolt, and may have decided he needed friends. He hastened to make contact with the new pope, who travelled to Ravenna to consult with Theoderic, whose goodwill would have been needed to treat with a foreign power. Having obtained approval from the king, Hormisdas despatched an embassy to Constantinople in the summer of 515. It was led by his old comrade Ennodius, by then bishop of Pavia, who was accompanied by Fortunatus, the bishop of the Sicilian town of Catania who may have been selected because he knew Greek, and a priest, a deacon, and a stenographer. But any expectations that the new pope would soften the line of his predecessor were destined to be disappointed, for having been positioned for papal office by Symmachus, Hormisdas naturally maintained his predecessor's line in dealing with the East. The memorandum carried by his representatives was particularly hostile to the church of Constantinople. Among those it anathematised were Nestorius, 'the heretic, formerly bishop of the city of Constantinople' and Acacius, 'formerly bishop of Constantinople, who was condemned by the apostolic see'; the miscreant who had caused so much trouble to pope Leo but had been the bishop of another city was described in

gentler terms, as ‘Dioscorus the Alexandrian’. Against the unstable church of Constantinople, Hormisdas set that which Christ had built on the rock of Peter, and which he thought of in traditional terms: ‘the catholic religion has always been maintained immaculate in the apostolic see.’ Those who signed the memorandum would express their assent to the letters of Leo, rather than the council of Chalcedon, and their wish to be in communion with Rome, in which the whole and real entirety of the Christian religion were to be found, and were to offer the signed document ‘to you, Hormisdas, holy and venerable pope of the city of Rome’. The document provided no theological rationale for condemning Acacius, but simply a demand for submission to Rome. But the embassy failed, for Anastasius felt that it would be a hard thing for the living to be expelled from the church on account of the dead. Before long, much more would be said concerning the relationship between the living and the dead.²²

In 517 a second embassy set out, again led by Ennodius, who was on this occasion accompanied by the bishop of Misenum, a town in Campania. They took with them letters addressed to various people confirming the faith, 19 secret documents, and a text to be signed, but again made no headway with the emperor, who was said to have tried to bribe the legates. The tactic had worked before, to the embarrassment of pope Felix, but Hormisdas’s legates were made of stronger stuff, and indicated that, whereas they would indeed be prepared to accept payment, they would only do so if the emperor gave satisfaction to the apostolic see. Infuriated, Anastasius cast them out through a back door and placed them on a dangerous ship, in the company of officials charged with preventing them from entering any city, although orthodox monks were able to circulate the 19 letters of faith widely on their behalf. But some bishops sent the letters to Constantinople; whereupon the enraged emperor is said to have sent a stern message to Hormisdas: ‘We wish to give orders, not be ordered.’ These, at least, are the words given by the *Liber Pontificalis*, but they constitute a misleadingly free paraphrase of the actual words Anastasius used: ‘We can tolerate being annulled, but not being given orders to.’ At that very time, the *Liber Pontificalis* observes, Anastasius was struck down by a thunderbolt sent by God and died, apparently experiencing a fate identical to that of his namesake pope Anastasius. As it often does, this text leaves its reader to deduce a cause and effect, and as is the case elsewhere the causation is suspect, for Anastasius wrote on 11 July 517, and would only die on 9 July 518.²³

Depending as it had on the support of the elderly and childless Anastasius, the position of Rome’s enemies in Constantinople became untenable following the accession of Justin, the commander of an elite group of troops charged with guarding the imperial palace. The new emperor and his nephew and successor, the better-known Justinian, who played an important role from the start of his

uncle's reign, were fervent supporters of the council of Chalcedon. It has been suggested that this was because they felt that union between the churches of Rome and Constantinople would aid a plan to recover the western provinces of the Empire that had been lost during the fifth century.²⁴ Yet it is not easy to see what practical help such a union could have been expected to have provided invading forces, the first of which would only set out 15 years later. Christian emperors since the time of Constantine had been preoccupied with determining correct doctrine, and we may take it that Justin and his nephew Justinian, who is known to have observed the fasts enjoined by the church and, as we shall see, took a great interest in theology, were acting out of conviction when they supported the position adopted by the church of Rome.²⁵

The new regime moved quickly, sending a legate to the pope with a request that he despatch as envoys bishops inclined towards peace, perhaps a hint that another visit from Ennodius would not have been welcome. Having again taken counsel with Theoderic, early in 519 Hormisdas despatched another embassy to Constantinople, comprising Germanus, the bishop of Capua, and another bishop whose see is not known, John, as well as a priest, Blandus, and, more significantly, two deacons, Dioscosus and Felix, the first of whom was elected pope just over a decade later, whereas the former may have been the pope of that name who entered office in 526. As the embassy approached the royal city it was met by joyous crowds that included Justinian, and four days after its arrival, just before Easter, the patriarch of Constantinople surrendered and accepted Hormisdas's formula. Having renounced Acacius, he contrived to retain some dignity by asserting that the council of Nicaea had been confirmed by the council of Constantinople, which the church of Rome had failed to ratify, softening a reference to Leo having been universal pope to having been pope of the city of Rome, and professing his acceptance of all the letters of pope Leo dealing with correct faith, a form of words that left open the possibility that not all of them had. But whereas such manoeuvres were pointers to future problems, and Hormisdas's lack of authority in the East was demonstrated by the failure of his proposal that the deacon Dioscorus be appointed patriarch of Alexandria, after 37 years the first schism between the churches of Rome and Constantinople had ended, with the capitulation of the latter.²⁶

Before long, a knotty theological problem surfaced within Rome. While he was still in Constantinople Dioscorus wrote to Hormisdas, warning him that a group of monks from Scythia whom the Devil had stirred up were on their way to Rome. A region of the southern side of the lower Danube where Latin was spoken, Scythia, the modern Dobruja, may give the appearance of being a backwater, but it was capable of producing serious thinkers, having been the birthplace of John Cassian, a major monastic author of the preceding century,

fluent in both Greek and Latin. The monks sought the pope's approval for certain propositions, among them the statement that one of the Trinity had been crucified. Three phrases in the Nicene Creed, according to which 'Jesus Christ... true God from true God... was crucified for us,' could be held to support such a formulation, but Dioscorus took strong exception to it, believing that it was unsupported by the councils, the letters of Leo, and the practice of the church. The position of the monks was certainly difficult to square with Leo's opposition to the teaching that God was able to suffer, and it seemed dangerously close to the words Peter the Fuller, a Miasyphite leader, had added to one of the prayers in the liturgy, the trisagion, that spoke of God having been crucified. The topic excited great interest among both clergy and laity in Rome, who responded to it in ways that seem to have mirrored the positions they had adopted during the Laurentian schism. When Symmachus's old ally, the senator Faustus, consulted a priest on the question, he was told that such teaching proceeded from the fountain of Arius. On the other hand, Boethius, a close friend of the deacon John, who was an important adherent of Laurentius, wrote two tracts on the question, one dedicated to his father-in-law, Symmachus, and the other to John, in which he came down in favour of the proposal of the monks, as did a learned monk, Dionysius Exiguus, who translated works on their behalf from Greek into Latin. Dionysius had already translated into Latin a document representatives of the church of Alexandria had given to legates sent from Rome to Constantinople in 497, when pope Anastasius was working towards restoring union with the church of Constantinople. Justinian himself wrote to Hormisdas seeking his verdict on the teaching of the monks, initially in a hostile manner but thereafter less so, and let it be known he expected an early response from the pope. Their doctrine will have commended itself as offering of a possible middle way between the positions of the adherents of the council of Chalcedon and their Miaphy-site opponents, but its apparent bringing together of the divine and human natures of Christ pointed in a different direction to the thinking of pope Leo. Hormisdas finally lost patience with the monks and told them to go away. Word was sent to the royal city that their teaching was unsound, but the powerful patron the monks had found would not forget their cause.²⁷

Gifts that Justin and Justinian gave to the church of Rome suggest that they were delighted to be in communion with it following the long schism. Exchanges of presents were far more important in late antiquity than they are today, and these were chosen with care, in the belief that things that gave pleasure were often successful where force of arms failed. Theoderic twice consulted with Boethius before sending presents to other kings: Gundobad the Burgundian received a clock and sundial, so that he would have in his country something he had seen when he was in Rome, and it was hoped that a harp

player who was sent to Clovis the Frank in response to a request would subdue the fierce hearts of foreigners by his sweet sound, in the manner of Orpheus. But such psychological warfare was rarely envisaged, for the giving of gifts normally functioned as a kind of soft diplomacy, it being hoped that the pleasure they gave their recipients would generate goodwill. Popes were no strangers to the art of selecting appropriate gifts, and whereas many of these were religious in nature, some were quite secular. The care with which these were chosen was particularly evident in those that were sent to females: Three rings, two with hyacinths and one of a whitish colour, were sent to a Lombard princess, a silver mirror and a comb of gold and ivory to an English queen. But the popes did not only send gifts; they also received them.²⁸

Whereas the Roman church frequently received largesse from the emperors who succeeded Constantine, this had dried up by the middle of the fifth century. At the entreaty of pope Sixtus III (432–440), Valentinian presented an elaborate gold image, which had 12 points of entry showing the 12 apostles and the Saviour, decorated with jewels, that was placed near the tomb of S Peter, in accordance with a vow he had made. It was similarly at the request of Sixtus that Valentinian donated a structure weighing 1,610 lbs of silver to the cathedral. These donations, made by an emperor who positioned himself as a friend of the Roman church, were followed by a quiet period, for only in the time of Hormisdas do we hear of the church again receiving gifts from secular authorities. It was then that a king of the Franks sent a golden crown with precious jewels to S Peter, presumably a votive crown of the kind emperors sometimes offered the patriarch; the king who made the gift would have been both seeking to please Hormisdas and making a statement about how he perceived his monarchy, and his present begins the long history of interactions between the church of Rome and Frankish monarchs. The emperor Justin despatched to S Peter's costly gifts, among them copies of the Gospels enclosed by covers of gold and precious gems, implements for the bread and wine used in the Eucharist, and an incense burner. Another gift consisted of pieces of purple cloth containing patches worked in gold, which are described as being from the clothes an emperor would wear. In 519 his nephew Justinian sent Hormisdas two silken altar frontals, and in the following year the patriarch of Constantinople sent him a chalice with gems all the way around it, one paten of gold and another of silver, and two silk veils. Silk was a highly prized commodity that entered the Mediterranean region through Constantinople; its distribution was controlled by the emperor, and the sending of some to the church of Rome was a mark of distinction. More imperial gifts were received during the pontificate of Hormisdas's successor John I, it being then that Justin sent liturgical vessels of silver and gold, and 15 pieces of cloth worked in gold, that were duly placed in S Peter's, S Paul's, S Mary's, and S Laurence's. Later,

when John II was pope, Justinian made donations of liturgical goods and another four pieces of purple cloth with gold patches to S Peter's. The church also benefitted from generosity on the part of Theoderic, such as he had never before displayed, although it was not on such a grand scale, for the king merely presented two silver candlesticks to S Peter's while Hormisdas was pope. As the contents of the *Liber Pontificalis*, from which most of this evidence is drawn, are patchy, conclusions based on its data must be tentative, and the sudden rush of gift-giving at this period may have owed something to the end of the Acacian schism. Nevertheless, that this brief season of abundance was preceded and followed by long periods in which no gifts are known to have been made suggests that there were more people than usual at that time who were keenly seeking the goodwill of the pope.²⁹

Hormisdas had successfully presided over the end of a major schism, and the assertion made in his epitaph that Greece had yielded to him was indisputably true. But when it went on to speak of Greece having been overcome by an authority that Hormisdas executed well, it obscured the reality that the schism had only ended because the imperial authorities wanted it to.³⁰ Before long a different reality would emerge, which no-one would experience more painfully than the person who had written those words.

More than most popes, **John I (13 August 523–18 May 526)** was a scholar, accustomed to move in intellectual circles. His opinion was valued by Boethius, who dedicated three treatises to him. One responded to a question John had raised on a technical point of logic, but the other two suggest that Boethius and John enjoyed discussing controversial matters of theology. In about 513 Boethius wrote a work entitled *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* that was prompted by a conciliatory letter some Greek bishops had sent to Rome which he thought had not been treated with sufficient respect when it was read in the senate; the short book was dedicated 'to his lord, the holy and venerable father John the deacon, (from) his son Boethius.' He sent the work to John for his judgment, asking him, should he find it acceptable, to place it among the other works he had written. Whereas the dating of Boethius's works is conjectural, he had certainly produced works on mathematics and logic by then, so it is highly likely that the future pope was collecting books he had written on secular, as well as religious, topics. Some years later, perhaps not long before John became pope, Boethius produced another short work with the cumbersome title *Whether Father, Son and Holy Spirit are Predicated of the Divinity with Regard to Substance*, that dealt with issues raised by the Scythian monks and finished with a request for John's opinion of it. Boethius dealt with a similar issue in a treatise, *On the Holy Trinity*, that he addressed to his father-in-law, the historian Symmachus, and we can dimly discern an intellectual circle to which the three men may have belonged. A letter that a

patrician, Senarius, sent to John raising theological issues was delivered by a man named Renatus, who is recorded in an annotation to a manuscript of the tenth or eleventh century as having corrected a manuscript that contained works by Boethius. Senarius, a well-known diplomat, was clearly a man who had access to useful information, for when a bishop in Gaul wondered as to the progress of one of pope Hormisdas's embassies to Constantinople it was he, rather than contacts among the clergy, whom he approached for information. John's name occurs in the list of those who attended the Roman synod of 499, when he had been the most junior among the deacons, and not surprisingly for one who consorted with senators, he had supported Laurentius during the following schism, only submitting to Symmachus in 506. That the letter in which he did this was kept in the church's archive suggests that his adherence was seen as significant. One has the impression of a big fish who was also a deep thinker, on easy terms with the scholarly laity of the city.³¹

Intellectuals who enter public life often find themselves out of their depth, but the shrewdest political operator would have struggled to deal with the situation in which John quickly became embroiled. Dangerous currents were beginning to swirl around the court of the aging Theoderic, whose failure to produce an heir left open the question of who would succeed him, and in the midst of them John's friend Boethius, who had been appointed to high office shortly before he became pope, was accused of treason on the basis of apparently incriminating letters and put in prison. It was claimed that he had sent the emperor Justin a letter hostile to Theoderic's kingdom. Worse was to follow. Probably towards the beginning of 526, although it could have been a little earlier, Theoderic summoned John to Ravenna, imposing on him a difficult task. He ordered the pope to go to Constantinople and ask the emperor Justin to restore to their original owners the churches of the anti-Nicenes that had been taken from them and turned over to the use of Catholics (it is possible that the restoration of people who had converted to Catholicism, rather than churches, was sought). In intervening on behalf of co-religionists beyond his kingdom, Theoderic was fulfilling a role traditional among emperors, for Constantine had seen himself as being responsible for Christians outside the Empire, and the Vandal king Huneric later acted in a similar way, when he tried to connect the welfare of Catholics in Africa with that of his fellow anti-Nicenes in the Empire. But the choice of the pope as envoy to the emperor, so recently restored to communion with Rome, and the entrusting to him of a task that was detrimental to the welfare of Catholics, was unprecedented. The burden Theoderic laid on John was interpreted in the most dire way, for a chronicler modelled the pope's words to him—'what you are going to do, king, do quickly'—on those Christ addressed to Judas, his betrayer (John 13: 27). The king took the embassy very seriously, for John was

accompanied by four high-powered members of the laity, three of them former consuls, and five bishops, among them that of his capital city, Ravenna.

The party was splendidly received in Constantinople, a crowd meeting them 12 miles outside the city, and a Byzantine chronicler, with an eye to the historical significance of the event, pointed out that the visit occurred 485 years after the apostle Peter had become a bishop. Whereas a claim that the people were happy that the parts of Greece had been worthy to receive the vicar of S Peter for the first time since a visit paid by Silvester in the days of Constantine can hardly be taken seriously, for there is no reason to believe that Silvester visited the area, there is no need to doubt a report that the visitors were met with lights and crosses and that Justin prostrated himself before the pope. Bishops were accustomed to being solemnly greeted as they approached towns, so that when Caesarius returned to his city of Arles after a period of exile a few years earlier he had been met by the populace of the town carrying candles and crosses as they sang psalms. But the reception of John had another element, for it recalls a ceremony described in a Byzantine text from a later period that seems to have originated in the sixth century, where we read of an emperor returning from a campaign or proceeding to his coronation being met outside the city and greeted by people who prostrated themselves before him. A writer of the ninth century described bishop John of Ravenna going forth from his city to meet king Theoderic with crucifixes, thuribles, and the Gospels, chanting psalms and prostrating himself. No text closer to the event mentions such an encounter between the king and the bishop, and the account may have been the product of the author's imagination, but at the very least its description of the reception of a secular ruler by a bishop shows similarity in protocol between the ways in which secular rulers and bishops were received. Justin, who had given gifts to S Peter's basilica in the time of Hormisdas, is said to have met John as if he were S Peter and to have agreed to all that the pope sought, except that heretics who had become Catholics were not to be allowed to return to their former persuasion. On the eve of Easter John crowned the emperor, and on the next day he celebrated the liturgy with Roman prayers, presumably in Hagia Sophia, in his presence. A Greek text written in the seventh century reveals that John's having presided at this liturgy was remembered with resentment. Coming so soon after the healing of the Acacian schism, it is hard to imagine a pope experiencing a greater triumph.

His very success may have been John's undoing, for a cold wind was blowing in Italy. The imprisoned Boethius imagined himself having been accused of wishing to set alight holy temples, murder priests with an evil sword, and to have devised the death of all good people, and at a time we cannot specify, Theoderic ordered him and Symmachus to be executed. That

Boethius had been accused of treacherous correspondence with Justin can have done nothing to make the king think well of his friend John, whom that emperor had treated with such deference. The pope returned to face a frosty reception, and the king ordered that he be held in confinement. John, who years earlier had been described as being weak, did not enjoy good health, and he died on 18 May 526. If he had left Constantinople immediately after celebrating Easter on 30 March, perhaps having delayed his departure so that he could do this, and proceeded directly to Ravenna, the dating is tight, but possible. John's body was brought from Ravenna to Rome, where he was buried in S Peter's. A man possessed by a demon was healed as his funeral moved through the streets, causing people, senators among them, to take fragments of his clothing as relics, and one version of the *Liber Pontificalis* described him as a martyr. An author writing in Gaul towards the end of the century had no doubt that John was among the Roman martyrs. His epitaph described him in the language of sacrifice familiar from pre-Christian times: 'A priest of the Lord, you lie down as Christ's sacrificial victim.' His royal persecutor, on the other hand, died of diarrhoea some three months later, in a manner that brought to mind the way in which the heretic Arius was believed to have met his end.³²

The description we have given of John's visit to the royal city is based on difficult material, and one of our two main sources, the account of John provided in the *Liber Pontificalis*, has come down to us in two forms, for we possess both the original version of the text and a second edition that was composed shortly afterwards.³³ In factual terms, the story they tell is virtually identical, and such changes as the second author introduces, such as John being met not 12 but 15 miles outside the city, and the statement that the people who met him were carrying torches and crosses, enhance the emphases of the earlier narrative rather than correct it in any significant way. More significant is the constant concern of the author of the second edition to heighten the descriptions of John. He twice refers to the pope as the vicar of Peter, using a term that Leo had implied when he asked those listening to one of his homilies to believe that the words they were hearing were those of the person whose function he was discharging, and was explicit in an oath that had been sworn to Gelasius 'in the sight of God and blessed Peter the apostle and his vicar'.³⁴ Whereas the first edition of the text has Justin prostrate himself before John, the second has him lowering himself to the ground as he does so, an expansion that adds nothing to the sense but makes it more visually powerful. More significantly, whereas the first edition has John dying in glory, the second states that he was a martyr. The alterations the author of the second edition made to the text that was before him point to a concern operating in this period for the way in which a pope was presented. Another indication of this

was a mutation in the way the word used for pope, *papa*, was being employed in Rome. For centuries, the word had been used of any bishop, rather than just those of Rome. People in Gaul were particularly lavish in their use of the word, Sidonius Apollinaris having addressed bishops to whom he sent letters as 'lord pope', and when Clovis wrote to the bishops on his kingdom early in the sixth century he addressed them as popes. For their part, the Irish looked on S. Patrick as 'our pope'. Gradually, it came to be accepted that the word applied to the bishop of Rome alone. But it is possible to trace the usage of the word within Rome mutating in further ways for it did not only cease to be applied to bishops other than that of Rome. It also became used in a different sense, for whereas in traditional usage it had been placed before the name of a pope, suggesting a kind of affectionate respect, it was now transferred after it, implying that it was being used as the title of an office.³⁵

A quarter of the way through the sixth century, John became the first pope to visit Constantinople. By the middle of the century, two others would follow in his footsteps.

John's life had ended in extraordinary circumstances, and his death on 18 May was followed by a long vacancy, for nearly two months passed before his successor, **Felix IV (12 July 526–22 September 530)**, was ordained. This was a flagrant violation of standard practice, according to which a new pope would be elected three days after the death of his predecessor, and suspicions that something untoward was afoot can only be heightened by the circumstance that Felix was ordained on a Monday, the only pope in late antiquity not to have been ordained on a Sunday. Indeed, whereas the second edition of the *Liber Pontificalis* asserts that Felix was ordained peacefully, the first edition describes him as having been ordained on the order of Theoderic, and its version must be the true one, for Theoderic's successor king Athalaric wrote to the senate shortly afterwards congratulating it on accepting the judgment of Theoderic concerning the election of a bishop, something that was noteworthy because he had been of a different religion. Doubtless memories of the decree Basilus presented on behalf of Odovacer in 483 that entrusted the selection of a pope to the secular power lingered, despite its having been overthrown by pope Symmachus. The senate was told to lay aside the earlier struggle, for there was no cause for grief when the qualities that had been sought in the other candidate were to be found in the one chosen by the king. One wonders in what frame of mind the senate had been acting, for the deaths of Symmachus, by then its most senior member, and Boethius would have been fresh in the minds of all, whereas the senators who had accompanied John to Constantinople are described as having been destroyed in prison on their return to Italy, and none of them is mentioned in any later source. But the candidate backed by the senate, whose identity is unknown to us, was laid

Felix may have used his good relationship with the government to the benefit of the church, for it is likely that the approval of the state would have been needed for it to take over a building at one end of the Forum Pacis, which the emperor Vespasian had dedicated in 75. Doctors had been accustomed to practise there, so it was fitting that the church Felix installed in the building was dedicated to Cosmas and Damian, a pair of medical saints whose practice of not receiving payments for their services caused them to be referred to as the unmercenary doctors. Their church was the first to be established in the area of the Forum, and marked the formal entry of Christianity into the heart of the classical city. During the two centuries since the conversion of Constantine, its progress into the centre of Rome had been decidedly patchy. Whereas the titular churches were scattered about the city, the shrines of the martyrs were all outside the walls, and the cathedral and the episcopal complex associated with it, like many others in Italy at the time, were located just inside the walls of the city. The Christian zone that had been emerging in the eastern section of the city's southern flank, where Sta Croce and S Stefano Rotondo stood not far from the cathedral, was marginal; even Sta Maria Maggiore was only a stroll of 20 minutes from the Lateran. The novel location of the church of Cosmas and Damian explains the comment of the *Liber Pontificalis*, redundant to modern eyes, that Felix built the new church in the city of Rome. At the centre of the mosaic that can still be seen in its apse stands the commanding figure of Christ, on either side of whom are Peter and Paul, shown in the act of presenting to him two younger figures, Cosmas and Damian, each holding a crown of martyrdom; perhaps we may see here a sign of developing hospitality on the part of the church of Rome, in which the cult of its own martyrs was very strong, to new arrivals from the East. Among the martyrs who were venerated in Rome were a number of pairs, in particular Achilleus and Nereus, Gervasius and Protasius, John and Paul, Peter and Marcellinus, and, of course, Peter and Paul, a pattern into which Cosmas and Damian fitted well. Their cult was in full swing at the time, for pope Symmachus had erected a church in their honour near Sta Maria Maggiore, and the emperor Justinian rebuilt and extended an earlier church that had been dedicated to them in the royal city, in the belief that they had saved him from serious illness. Behind the two medical saints shown in the mosaic stand on one side the figure of Theodore, also holding a crown, a saint in whose honour Justinian had built a church during the reign of Justin, and on the other a much-restored figure of pope Felix, holding a model of the church. The presence of the bishop in a scene apparently set in heaven marks an advance in the way in which popes were portrayed, a theme to which we shall return later.³⁷

If the ordination of Felix had been long delayed, that of his successor **Boniface II (22 September 530–17 October 532)** took place with unbecoming haste, for it occurred on the very day that Felix died. On his deathbed Felix acted in accordance with the practice envisaged by Symmachus, directing that on his departure from this light the archdeacon Boniface was to govern the Roman church, and in the presence of priests, deacons, senators, and patricians he handed him a pallium, a vestment that only the pope could wear in Rome. Foreseeing that not everyone would be happy at what he had done, Felix declared such people excommunicated in advance, and sent notification to all the titular churches and the senate. But Felix's precautions were in vain, for on the same day that Boniface was ordained in the basilica of Julius, oddly enough the church in which his namesake Boniface I, whose election was similarly contested, had been ordained, another man was ordained, and he in the cathedral, suggesting that he enjoyed more support, or at the very least that his supporters were better organised. The second claimant to the chair of Peter, the deacon Dioscorus, was a very senior member of the church, having been one of Symmachus's closest advisers who had gone on to participate in the embassy Hormisdas had sent to Constantinople in 519, during which he had enjoyed private lines of communication with the pope. Hormisdas had entertained lofty ambitions for his protégé, at one time hoping that he would become bishop of his city of origin, Alexandria. Only the death of Dioscorus, after 28 days in which there had been two rival popes, averted a serious schism, but Boniface was not in a forgiving mood. He forced 60 priests who had supported Dioscorus to sign a document in which they anathematised him and promised they would attempt nothing similar in the future. The manuscript was buried away in the archive of the church. Boniface showed a kinder face when he presented the clergy with dishes from inheritances he had received, and treated them generously when famine threatened, gestures through which he may have been trying to win their support. He then tried to follow the example of Felix and impose his successor on the church. Having summoned a synod at which he claimed the right to choose the next pope, he had the priests sign a document that they would support the deacon Vigilius, and confirm this by an oath. But given that 74 priests had attended the synod convoked by Symmachus in 499, the 60 who had supported Dioscorus were clearly a majority, and they later rebelled, forcing Boniface to admit at a later synod that in nominating his successor he had violated the canons. Humiliatingly, Boniface burned the decree as all the priests, the clergy, and the senate looked on.³⁸ Whereas direct evidence of his political leaning is lacking, Boniface was presumably regarded as a friend of the Ostrogothic government, having been imposed by Felix, who had himself been imposed by Theoderic. In this connection it is interesting that his father, Sigibuld, bore a Germanic

name, although the degree of fluidity between various groups in the West in late antiquity makes it problematic to see him, still less his son, as someone who would have been thought of as a Goth. But in the East Dioscorus was remembered as a pope who had been anathematised after his death. The Eastern opinion expressed a view that dead people could indeed be anathematised, but it does suggest that Dioscorus, rather than Boniface, may have been accepted as pope in Constantinople.³⁹

The awkwardness that marked the preceding two pontificates continued into that of **John II (2 January 533–8 May 535)**. Unlike most popes of the period, he had previously been a priest rather than a deacon, and the long interregnum prior to his assuming office suggests that his accession, like that of his two predecessors, was not straightforward. The name of his father, Proiectus, was a resolutely classical one that had been borne by a senator in the fifth century, and he had given his son the name of a popular Roman god, Mercurius. It is possible that the family came from the well-to-do area of the Caelian Hill, and while he was still a priest the future pope was wealthy enough to make offerings to the churches of S Peter in Chains and S Clemente. As he was still known as Mercurius at that time, it was probably when he assumed papal office that he did what some empresses, but no preceding pope, had done, and exchanged an embarrassing name for one with no evil connotations. Whereas several bishops named Mercurius had attended synods in the time of pope Symmachus, the case of a bishop of the fourth century named Auxenius, who had formerly been known as Mercurinus, suggests that people could be uncomfortable with the name, and a lingering awareness of the traditional deities within Rome may have made it seem inappropriate for a pope.⁴⁰

The new name John chose may have been more significant than the one he abandoned, for it could not help bringing to mind pope John I who, less than a decade previously, had died in confinement and may have already been thought of as a martyr. If he selected it with him in mind, John may have anticipated poor relations with the Gothic government. Indeed, shortly after his delayed accession, the king wrote a long letter to him in response to a complaint a defender of the church had made, that on the death of Boniface certain people had canvassed for office with abominable machination. In order to raise money for bribes, sacred vessels had been exposed for sale. The golden paten and chalice, the latter embellished with jewels, that Justinian and Theodora can be seen holding in a mosaic in the church of S Vitale in Ravenna are examples of the liturgical apparatus that could be found in wealthy churches, and an obvious reminder of how portable such wealth was. They were a vulnerable asset, and a reference to pope Pelagius I as later restoring to all the churches their gold and silver vessels and cloths indicates that these

items had been stored in safety during a period of warfare and the absence of the pope. Despite being such a handy form of exchange, such vessels were not universally acceptable, for an imperial bodyguard who demanded a payment in gold from a new patriarch of Constantinople was angry when he was sent sacred vessels. During the difficult days of Boniface the senate had issued a formal resolution, which, after the shenanigans that accompanied the election of John, the government confirmed: Whatever promises anyone had made to become a bishop, whether in person or through intermediaries, were to be invalid, and anything that had been sought or received was to be returned. The Ostrogothic king went further, providing that, in cases where a dispute concerning the consecration of an apostolic pontiff was taken to the palace, 3,000 solidi would be charged for the processing of documents; other churches where the episcopate was in contention were to be limited to lesser sums. Whistle blowers were encouraged to come before the judges, for if the allegations they made turned out to be true, they could keep a third of the sum involved, the remainder being spent on the fabric or upkeep of churches. Another letter, addressed to the prefect of the city, mentions the problem of people polluting themselves with abominable cupidity in the consecration of the most blessed pope. For the benefit of the present and future ages, the decree of the government and the senate's resolution were to be engraved on marble tablets and placed before the atrium of S Peter's, where everyone could see them.⁴¹

We here enter a grey area. The second canon issued by the council of Chalcedon declared that ordinations or promotions that had been obtained by payment were to be of no effect, although this presumably dealt with money that changed hands within a church. This, however, may not have been the case when two emperors legislated against bishops paying money to gain office in 469, stylishly quoting an expression used by Vergil when they referred to a holy hunger for gold, while a few years later a Western emperor, rather late in the day, expressed the view that God had been turning his favour away from the Roman people because men were paying to become bishops. But whereas Justinian prescribed that in such cases the giver, the recipient, and the go-between were all to be punished, he also supplied a list of payments that bishops could make to officials, specifying that such payments were not purchases but offerings. Despite such difficulties, good relations between the pope and at least one of the officials of the government persisted, for after Cassiodorus assumed a high office in September 533 he wrote to John, asking him to pray earnestly to the heavenly ruler for the well being of those who governed the Roman state, and to pray for the subversion of its enemies and peaceful times. Alas, dealing with those enemies were increasingly to occupy the energies of popes, in times that were anything but peaceful.⁴²

Some months after John became pope, Justinian's general Belisarius set sail for Africa, and by the end of the year the Vandal kingdom there had ceased to exist. Whether or not an invasion of Italy was already expected, Justinian had suddenly become a major power in the western Mediterranean, and the pope may have decided to walk more delicately than he otherwise would have. As part of his ongoing attempts to reconcile the Miaphysites with the followers of the council of Chalcedon, in June 533 Justinian sent John a statement of faith, which ended with a note of greeting in his own handwriting. The emperor sought the pope's approval of his position in matters of faith, apparently in opposition to legates who had been sent to Rome by the Sleepless Monks, members of a monastery in Constantinople who had long been allies of the church of Rome, who denied that the Virgin had given birth to God and that one of the Trinity had become incarnate and suffered in the flesh. Caught between the will of the emperor and the traditions of his church, John delayed his response, just as Hormisdas had done when pressed by Justinian concerning the Scythian monks. But John was no Hormisdas, and when he finally replied in March 534 it was to inform the emperor that his views were acceptable. This committed him to the doctrine that Christ, when made human and crucified, remained one of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, a view similar to that of the Scythian monks who had held that one of the Trinity had been crucified. John aligned himself with the emperor rather than an earlier pope. His concession may have gone against the deepest instincts of the Western church, for at the time of the Great Schism in the eleventh century, the Roman spokesperson Humbert accused the Byzantines of sharing what he called the 'Theupaschite' view that in the Eucharist the bread became the body of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; although his application of the term was false, Humbert had no doubt that it denoted something wrong. John was also prepared to ditch the Sleepless Monks and, more importantly, yielded ground when he wrote of his adherence to the four councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesos, and Chalcedon. Hitherto the Roman church had been uneasy about the second of these. It had not been represented there, and the canon according to which the bishop of Constantinople was to have a primacy of honour after the bishop of Rome, because his city was a younger Rome, rankled; for example, Hilary had confirmed the councils of Nicaea, Ephesos and Chalcedon, but not Constantinople, and Simplicius, writing to Acacius, confirmed the councils that had responded to the impieties of Arius, Nestorius, and Dioscorus and Eutyches, thereby avoiding the third council. John yielded ground that the Roman church had held since the council presided over by Damasus in 382.⁴³

Well pleased at his exchange with the pope, Justinian included their correspondence in his Codex, a definitive compilation of Roman law as it stood

in November 534. But there were benefits in being a friend of the emperor. In May 535 Justinian wrote to John extending the statute of limitations, that is, the period during which legal proceedings could be undertaken, from 30 to 100 years throughout the West, and in those regions of the East where the Roman church had possessions. He also resumed the practice of sending gifts to the church, which had lapsed while Felix and Boniface had been popes; the former having been appointed by the Gothic government, and the latter by him, they may not have been seen as fitting recipients of imperial largesse. The cloths and liturgical vessels of gold and silver that Justinian sent John may have been rewards for services rendered.⁴⁴

John was succeeded by the most senior deacon in Rome, whose impeccably Christian name, **Agapetus (13 May 535–22 April 536)**, doubtless reflects his having been the son of a priest. Indeed, his father, Gordianus, had been killed by enemies of pope Symmachus during the Laurentian schism, and the future pope may have been the Agapetus whom Symmachus appointed a deacon at about that time. On becoming pope he did something his gentle predecessor had neglected to do, by bringing the declarations of anathema Boniface had extorted from the priests and bishops out of the archives of the church and burning them in the middle of the cathedral. The impression of vigour is confirmed by letters he wrote within a few months of becoming pope that show him taking a firm line on various issues with the bishop of Arles, the bishops of Africa, and indeed Justinian.⁴⁵ But Agapetus displayed his strength and energy to the greatest effect when he was far from home. Unfortunately, three extant accounts of his doings on that occasion point in very different directions, so it will be best to deal with them one by one.

Following the rapid capture of Africa from the Vandals, the Gothic king Theodahad concluded that Italy was next on Justinian's menu. What could be more natural than sending the pope to intercede on his behalf? The *Liber Pontificalis* reports that he did so, and that Agapetus was received with glory when he arrived in Constantinople. But when the conversation between the pope and the emperor turned to matters of religion, and Agapetus asserted the standard Roman position that Christ was both divine and human, there being two natures in the one Christ, we are told that the temperature became cooler, and Justinian threatened him with deportation. A debate between the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus, ensued, in which the latter refused to commit himself as to whether Christ had two natures, as taught by the council of Chalcedon. Filled with joy, the emperor humiliated himself before the apostolic see and adored Agape-tus. Anthimus was excommunicated and exiled, and at Justinian's request Agapetus ordained a new patriarch, Menas. We know from elsewhere that he had a stunning success, for before long Agapetus wrote to the bishop of Jerusalem, boasting

that that no other church in the east had received a bishop ordained by the hands of his see since the time of the apostle Peter. Having obtained everything he had been sent to achieve, Agapetus fell ill and died while still in Constantinople.⁴⁶

This version of events has been widely followed, and lies behind Dante's belief that Agapetus was responsible for converting Justinian from believing that Christ had only one nature.⁴⁷ But in a learned account he wrote of theological controversies from the time of Nestorius until 553, the Carthaginian deacon Liberatus understood his mission differently, and the circumstance that he had been part of a group who brought a letter from the bishops of Africa to pope John II, although it was Agapetus who received it, suggests that he may have been well placed to give an accurate account. Whereas Liberatus gives the same reason as the *Liber Pontificalis* for the pope undertaking his trip, he places it in a much more dramatic context, stating that Agapetus departed after king Theodahad had written to him and the senate, threatening to put the senators, their wives, sons, and daughters to the sword if they failed to prevent Justinian invading. Arriving in Constantinople, he discovered that Justinian had spent too much money to call the expedition off. But when the emperor asked him to greet Anthimus and share communion with him, the pope refused, saying that the patriarch would have to prove that he was orthodox and return to his own see, for it was impossible for a man who had moved from one church to another to remain in the second. Prior to becoming patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus had been the bishop of Trebizond, and his move from being the bishop of one town to that of another violated a principle laid down by the council of Nicaea, which forbade bishops to transfer from one city to another. Anthimus returned his pallium to Justinian and Theodora, and retired under the protection of the latter.⁴⁸

But an odd report that Agapetus financed the trip by pawning vessels of the church, some of which had been offered for sale just a few years earlier to raise money to pay for election expenses, suggests that the pope may have had another motive in making the trip, and an eastern source provides a very different reason for it. According to this, Ephrem, the bishop of Antioch, had become concerned at the increasing influence of Miaphysite churchmen who enjoyed the support of the empress Theodora. He therefore sent two laypeople, Sergius, a learned doctor with a bad reputation for womanising, and Eustathius, a young architect, to Rome with a letter addressed to Agapetus. On receiving it, Agapetus travelled to Constantinople with them, but according to this account there was nothing glorious about his arrival, for he was greeted by an earthquake, a darkening of the sun and moon, and a movement of the ocean.⁴⁹ Worse was to follow, for according to another source that vaguely described Agapetus as having been summoned to the east by some cause,

Agapetus incurred the anger of a Miaphysite holy man, who mysteriously told emissaries of the emperor and patriarch to wait until the fifth day of the week. The pope's tongue began to grow, until it came down to his breast, and on the fifth day he miraculously perished. There is no hint of triumph in this account.⁵⁰

We are therefore confronted with three accounts of Agapetus's mission to Constantinople that disagree as to both the reason for his voyage and what he accomplished. The third is the least plausible, but it has the merit of indicating the vehement hostility between the Miaphysite and Chalcedonian camps, and the possibility of their accounts being suspect. As Theoderic had sent John I to the royal city to intercede with an emperor 10 years previously, there would have been nothing to wonder at had Theodahad done the same. Additionally, Agapetus certainly deposed Anthimus, but whether this was because of his faulty belief or his having left one church to become the bishop of another is difficult to establish, although we may be inclined to suspect the former, as Agapetus took controversy with the Miaphysites seriously, having sent from Italy a group of clergy to be present at a council held in Constantinople in 536.⁵¹ Perhaps, on balance, the account in the *Liber Pontificalis* stands closest to the truth. But there are problems with it, the most obvious being its claim that Agapetus obtained everything for which he had been sent, when there is no reason to believe that he gained the slightest concession in favour of the person it credits with having sent him, king Theodahad. The claim recalls the assertion in the same text that John I and his senatorial colleagues had returned from Constantinople having obtained everything. Perhaps the text attempted to make Agapetus's doings in the East conform to a model of how things should have been. As it happens, the period was an important one in the writing of the *Liber Pontificalis*, and it will be worth our while pausing to investigate this work in its own right.

The Liber Pontificalis

We have frequently drawn on the text modern scholars refer to as the *Liber Pontificalis*, although we do not know by what name its authors called it, that purports to offer an account of the deeds of every pope from S Peter until the end of the middle ages. Material placed at its beginning suggests that it should be taken very seriously. The text begins with what is alleged to be a letter the priest Jerome wrote to pope Damasus from Jerusalem, seeking from him an account of what had taken place in his see from the time of Peter until his own

times, in particular which popes had deserved to receive the crown of martyrdom and which overstepped the canons of the apostles. It is followed by a reply in the name of Damasus, no more than a covering note to what he had been able to find, apparently the text of the *Liber Pontificalis* for the period up to that time. Whereas it would have been appropriate for Jerome, a noteworthy historian who had been associated with Damasus when he lived in Rome, to have made such a request, the Latin in which the letter is written falls far short of that of the accomplished stylist that Jerome was, and the text must have been forged, no less than another spurious letter of Jerome to Damasus that deceived no less a person than pope Gregory I. But it nicely paralleled a genuine and much longer letter Jerome had sent to Damasus that functions as a preface to his translation of the Gospels within the Vulgate translation of the Bible. The two letters open in the same way—‘To the blessed pope Damasus, Jerome’—except that the *Liber Pontificalis* gives the adjective in the superlative form, ‘most blessed’, and whereas the letter associated with the Gospels concludes by asking the most blessed pope to remember him, the one attached to the *Liber Pontificalis* asks the most blessed pope to pray for him.⁵² The latter exchange of letters will have been concocted to give the text that followed it an air of authenticity and, conceivably, to suggest that there was something scriptural about its contents.

Alas, although there are elements of truth even in its earliest sections, it contains a good deal of falsehood. But a number of indications point to when it became a contemporary, and hence more reliable source of information. For example, the *Liber Pontificalis* supplies the names of the emperors who were contemporary with the popes of the early centuries. In its accounts of popes of the fourth century the practice lapsed, only to be resumed towards the end of the fifth century in the case of Felix III, and from the time of Symmachus there is additional detail, with the names of the consuls for the first and last years of a pope’s period of office being supplied. Presumably we can see the hand of one or more authors with access to good records from the very end of the fifth century, and less complete ones for a short while before then. Modern scholars are slightly at variance as to precisely when the text began to be the work of contemporaries, but almost all believe that the data supplied in its accounts of popes from late in the fifth century should be taken seriously, and that at some point in the early decades of that century it became a contemporary source. It has been argued from the quality of its Latin that it was begun during the seventh century, but it would be more true to see this as a sign that it originated among elements of the church structure that did not possess a high level of culture.⁵³

The account of papal activities offered by the *Liber Pontificalis* for the period we have been considering is remorselessly triumphalist. Councils that involved

popes emerge as having been better attended than they really were. Its estimate of 1,200 bishops attending the council of Chalcedon is roughly twice the figure that it was credited with shortly afterwards, and vastly more than that of approximately 370 to which modern scholarship has whittled it down. Perhaps the error can be excused by its degree of remoteness in time and place, but such considerations can hardly explain its crediting pope Symmachus with bringing together in a synod 115 bishops, a figure that sits awkwardly with the figures of 66 who attended it and 71 who signed it proceedings, given that the proceedings of that synod were stored in the archive of the church to which the author will have had access.⁵⁴ Its authors were particularly interested in delineating relations between popes and emperors, which they sometimes treated in formulaic language, as they did when claiming that popes sent to Constantinople obtained everything. It is as though an expectation that something would occur overrode contrary reality. The text attributes bold words to pope Agapetus when he was threatened with exile while in Constantinople: 'Although I am a sinner, I desired to come to Justinian, the most Christian emperor, but now I have found Diocletian. Nevertheless, I am not at all afraid of your threats.' The sentiment was too good to use just once, and when pope Vigilius was in the royal city he was credited with saying: 'As I see it, it is not the most pious rulers Justinian and Theodora who have made me come to them, but today I know that I have found Diocletian and Eleutheria.' The writing was imaginative, for the name of Diocletian's wife was Prisca, and she may have been a Christian.⁵⁵

Whoever wrote these parts of the *Liber Pontificalis* was playing on a particular significance the figure of Diocletian had for people in Rome just then. A text written during the time of the Laurentian schism represents him as having persuaded pope Marcellinus to enter a temple where, in a moment of weakness, he offered incense to the gods. It has much in common with the account of that pope in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which describes him, after sinning by sacrificing as well as offering incense at a time of persecution, as having been among a group of people who were beheaded and crowned with martyrdom, in accordance with an order of Diocletian. A variant to the text describes him repenting before a synod of 180 bishops, an implausibly large number, and blaspheming Diocletian and idols made by human hands. Among the bishops of Rome Marcellinus was clearly a black sheep, and the embarrassment caused by his faltering in the face of Diocletian's persecution was later responded to by stories that he had become a martyr, which there is no reason to believe. Hence, when the authors of the accounts of Agapetus and Vigilius in the *Liber Pontificalis* identified Justinian with Diocletian, they were casting that emperor not merely as a generic persecutor of Christians, but as an emperor who was thought of at that time as posing a particular danger to

popes, so that the language it attributes to Agape-tus and Vigilius in the presence of Justinian would have resonated more deeply with contemporaries than a quick reading of the text may suggest. The origins of this text can therefore be placed within the extraordinary volume of written material generated within the Roman church early in the sixth century. It would be centuries before the sheer liveliness of this short period would be repeated.⁵⁶

It took some time for news of the death of Agapetus to reach Rome, and the see had been vacant for nearly seven weeks before Hormisdas's son, the subdeacon **Silverius (8 June 536–11 November 537)**, was installed to succeed him. A hostile account in the *Liber Pontificalis* claims that he was raised to office by king Theodahad, who had been corrupted by money and led the clergy to believe that anyone who did not consent to his ordination would be punished by the sword. We are told that the priests delayed subscribing according to the traditional practice because he had been ordained through force and fear and that they did not undertake the customary procedures before he was ordained, and that they only did this later to preserve unity. The fractious nature of the Roman clergy at the time gives this account a certain plausibility, but one version of the text fails to mention Theodahad's having been corrupted and making threats, thus making him alone responsible for the accession of Silverius, and its version is more likely to be true. 10 years earlier, after John had died, Theoderic had imposed Felix IV on the church, and the position of the Ostrogothic state was now more desperate, for Byzantine invaders were by then advancing northwards across the south of Italy, giving Theodahad every reason to put in place as pope a man he considered likely to be reliable. Who would be better than the son of Hormisdas, whose epitaph proudly spoke of him as having overcome Greece? But Gothic soldiers, irritated at the incompetence of their king, deposed Theodahad and replaced him by a military man, Vitigis, probably in late November. The new king thought it best to abandon Rome and, having exhorted Silverius to be loyal, left the city. Before long, however, the pope was among those urging that the emperor's army be admitted into it, and on 9 December Belisarius entered Rome through the Porta Asinaria, as the troops Vitigis had left behind were withdrawing through the Porta Flaminia. Whatever money Theodahad had laid out to secure the election of Silverius had not been well spent; not only had it failed in its purpose, but it compromised the pope in the eyes of the new regime.⁵⁷

Currents flowing far from Rome also played into Silverius's situation. The Byzantine authorities had recently been intervening in senior church appointments, the empress Theodora being said to have arranged the appointments of patriarchs in both Alexandria and Constantinople in 535. She had been involved in Italian affairs, having received five letters from

Ostrogothic royalty during the years 534–535,⁵⁸ and the deposition of her appointee to the throne of Constantinople, Anthimus, by pope Agapetus a few months prior to the accession of Silverius had given her no reason to love the Roman church. She is said to have written to Silverius inviting him to come to Constantinople and restore Anthimus. Doing so would have constituted an intolerable reversal of Agapetus's achievement, and Silverius naturally refused. But standing in the wings was the man Boniface had tried to install as his successor, the deacon Vigilius, who was then in Constantinople. His family had traditions of serving the state at high levels, for his father, John, an old friend of Ennodius, had been praetorian prefect under Theoderic, and in 527 his brother Reparatus had been appointed prefect of the city of Rome. But the chief loyalty of the family was to the Empire, and when Reparatus was taken as a hostage by king Vitigis late in 536, he escaped into territory controlled by the Byzantines. Rumour had it that, after Silverius had refused to undo the deposition of Anthimus, Theodora obtained from Vigilius a written undertaking that, should he become pope, he would take steps against the council of Chalcedon, although the evidence is suspect, for we are now in a period when it can be difficult to disentangle the truth from propaganda. But Vigilius certainly turned up in Italy before Belisarius took Rome, perhaps having accompanied the body of Agapetus back to the city. He brought with him a letter from Theodora to Belisarius, telling the general to depose Silverius or send him to Constantinople, and drawing his attention to the fact that Vigilius, who had promised to restore Anthimus, was now present in Rome. The empress had also made 700 lbs of gold available to Vigilius for any expenses he might incur. From that point the fate of Silverius was sealed.⁵⁹

Just 10 years earlier, enemies of Boethius had forged letters that placed him in an incriminating position, and what had been done once could be done again. Not long after Vitigis had returned to Rome with a large army and laid it to siege early in 537, two officials produced a letter they claimed Silverius had written to the king, offering to betray Rome if he came to the Porta Asinaria. This was the gate through which Belisarius had entered Rome and another Gothic king would enter it some years later, and its location, just to the east of the Lateran, would have made it an ideal place for the city's bishop to admit enemies. People who still remembered an accusation that servants of the noble lady Proba had let the forces of Alaric enter Rome through the Porta Salaria in 410 lived in an atmosphere where the fear of treachery was easy to provoke.⁶⁰ Belisarius dismissed the report, which he attributed to ill will, but as the accusers persisted he became afraid; the turn of the narrative of the *Liber Pontificalis* at this point, suggesting as it does that Belisarius experienced fear similar to that of Pilate when people persisted in making accusations against Christ, indirectly makes Silverius resemble the latter, just as the chronicler who

described John's dealing with Theoderic before he went to Constantinople cast him as Christ. On 11 March Belisarius had Silverius come to the Pincian palace, a building erected by the state in the early fifth century that had been well maintained, Theoderic having ordered a few decades earlier that marble be transported to it from Ravenna. The clergy were present, and made to stand behind curtains, from where they could draw whatever conclusions seemed appropriate; a mosaic of the early eighth century in the church of Sta Maria Antiqua gives us an idea of what the curtains were like.

There unfolded a tableau worthy of a film directed by Eisenstein. Silverius and Vigilius were ushered in, to be confronted by Belisarius's wife Antonina who was lying on a couch, the general seated at her feet. Antonina spoke: 'Do tell, lord pope Silverius, what we have done to you and the Romans, for you to want to betray us into the hands of the Goths?' As she was speaking, a subdeacon entered, who removed the pallium from Silverius's shoulders and took him into a side room where he was stripped of his clothes and clad in the garb of a monk, thereafter to disappear. Another subdeacon told the clergy what had happened, whereupon they all fled. Before long Belisarius called together the priests, deacons, and all the clergy and ordered them to elect another pope. Some had the courage to resist, but with Belisarius's support Vigilius was elected, and assumed office on 29 March. He seems to have dealt with his successor by having him sent to the distant town of Pataras in Lycia, where his situation came to the notice of Justinian. The emperor had not participated in the machinations whereby he had been deposed, these having been orchestrated by Theodora, and over the protests of another of her allies, the deacon Pelagius, he ordered that Silverius be taken back to Rome for a proper trial. But when Silverius arrived Belisarius handed him over to Vigilius, who exiled him to Palmaria, a suitably remote, small island off the coast of Liguria, where, having been sustained by 'the bread of tribulation and the water of distress' (cf 1 Kings 22: 27), he died on 20 June. He was buried there, rather than at S Peter's, and the account of him in the *Liber Pontificalis* closes by asserting that many sick people visited his tomb and were cured, and that 'the bishopric was vacant.' The formula is standard at the end of its accounts of popes, but elsewhere the interval between the death of a pope and the installation of his successor is precisely indicated, and the lack of one at this point can only mean that some believed Silverius remained pope after being deposed. We shall return to this point later.⁶¹

The epitaph Silverius composed for his father Hormisdas describes Greece as yielding to him. One might see his fate as Greece taking a frightening revenge. Behind the treatment of Silverius lay assumptions as to where authority lay in the Christian world that were very different to those current in Rome, which will be worth exploring, for popes would have to deal with them for centuries.

Before long they would entrap Vigilus as well.

East and West

By the time of Justinian, Constantinople had become far more significant than Rome. Justinian felt that the word Rome was to be understood as including not only the old city but also the new, royal one; a few decades later a poet could use the word to refer to Constantinople alone, and think of what he referred to as 'Latin Rome' as taking parental delight in having been surpassed by her child.⁶² The 40,000 lbs of silver that were used to embellish the sanctuary of the new cathedral of Hagia Sophia that was erected in the 530s following the destruction by fire of its predecessor dwarfed the embellishments Constantine had provided for the churches he built in Rome. Despite the deference emperors paid to popes and Justinian's desire to win back the lost western provinces, Byzantines found it easy to overlook the West. Whereas Dionysius Exiguus translated Greek canons into Latin for the benefit of pope Hormisdas, a Greek canonist, John Scholastikos, who produced his *Synagoge* a few decades later, included in it not a single piece of western legislation. Few in the East noticed that scarcely anyone from the West attended the councils that were routinely called 'ecumenical'. Whereas a delegation from Rome attended the council of Chalcedon, the tally of Western bishops there came to only four, three of them Africans who may have fled to the East after Vandals occupied Africa, and hence not have travelled with a view to attending the council.⁶³

Since the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476, Rome had been ruled by governments led by non-Catholics. Doubtless the incorporation of the city within the Christian Empire ruled from Constantinople that Belisarius had effected was, in principle, welcome to the church. But the emperors in Constantinople, heirs to a long tradition of Greek political thought with pre-Christian roots, were inclined to see themselves as possessing more authority than those in the West had earlier claimed. In a law addressed to a patriarch of Constantinople, Justinian asserted that the episcopate and the Empire were the greatest gifts of God to humanity, the former serving divine things and the latter presiding over human affairs with the necessary care. Such a division of labour pointed in a different direction to that which Gelasius and Symmachus had envisaged, and was given further point by the observation that the dignity of bishops was a matter of concern for emperors.⁶⁴ From a Western perspective, such emperors may have appeared as potentially dangerous busy bodies. In 539 Justinian promulgated legislation concerning how monks were

to live. He forwarded this to the patriarchs, for them to send it to the metropolitans, who would in turn then send it to the other bishops, with whom lay the responsibility for making it known to monks and abbots.⁶⁵ There could be no mistaking who stood at the top of this chain of command, in which the highest-ranking members of the apparatus of the church served as channels by which the emperor's decision would be distributed, nor could anyone doubt his concern for a matter that few Western rulers would have dreamed of interfering in.

In the East, the church had become more fully integrated into the structures of secular authority. Whereas the cathedral in Rome was nestled near a wall at the edge of the city, far from the palace and the forum, that in Constantinople was located downtown, adjacent to the palace and the hippodrome, and free of significant competition from shrines of martyrs. And whereas no ruler had been involved in the building of a church in Rome since pope Sixtus built a basilica to St Laurence with the agreement of the emperor Valentinian, when the cathedral of Hagia Sophia burned down during riots a century later, it was the emperor who committed massive resources to replacing it, and who was said to have instructed the architects how to resolve a difficult problem that arose during its construction, apparently having been inspired by God. The protocol for the consecration of important churches in Constantinople seems to have involved the emperor processing with the people while the patriarch rode in a carriage, but even this degree of dignity the leader of the church enjoyed was borrowed, for the carriage was that of the emperor. Having founded a new city named after himself, Prima Justiniana, at his birthplace in what is now Serbia, Justinian wrote to its bishop in 535, stating that he was to be both a metropolitan and an archbishop, and specified the territory that would be under his jurisdiction. This created a difficult situation for pope Agapetus, who had entered office just a few weeks earlier, in more than one way: The emperor had acted unilaterally, his decision seemed to imply that the status of a church depended on its political importance, a principle bitterly opposed in Rome, and it entailed the transfer of churches from the authority of Thessaloniki, where the bishop had for over 100 years been a papal vicar, to that of the new church. As it turned out, Justinian's unilateral act did not cause serious difficulty. Agapetus treated the matter with apparent equanimity in a letter he wrote in October to the emperor, who, 10 years later, was happy for pope Vigilius to define the role of the archbishop in the provinces subject to him; however, the assumptions according to which pope and emperor operated were clearly very different.⁶⁶

Diverse attitudes were expressed in different understandings as to who was responsible for changes to the content of the liturgy. In Rome, it was taken for granted that this was a matter controlled by the bishop of the city. It came to

be believed that Peter himself had enjoined that mass was to be celebrated with bread and wine mixed with water, with no more than the Lord's Prayer and sanctification by the Holy Cross, and that the other apostles imitated what he did. An expectation that other churches would have been well advised to follow the practice of Rome may have lurked behind the notion of Peter having been imitated, so that Gregory the Great, without mentioning Peter, believed that it had been the practice of the apostles to consecrate the host to the accompaniment of the Lord's Prayer alone. Popes subsequent to Peter are described, with increasing levels of plausibility, as building on this rather sparse beginning: At the commencement of the second century Alexander is said to have made the Lord's passion part of what the priests said. His successor, Sixtus I, enjoined the singing of the Sanctus; the following pope, Telesphorus, introduced the singing of the Gloria at Christmas, a practice that Symmachus extended to other times; Celestine began the practice of singing psalms; Leo I was responsible for the section of the mass beginning 'Holy sacrifice'; Gelasius produced prefaces and prayers for the sacraments; Gregory made additions to the prayer, 'Therefore, Lord', that Bede thought were of the utmost perfection and was thought to have introduced the chant 'Lord have Mercy'; and Sergius was responsible for introducing the chant 'Lamb of God'. Seen in this way, the Roman mass was the product of a series of accretions, for each of which a pope had been responsible.⁶⁷

No-one in Constantinople thought in such terms. It is likely that a hymn still sung in the liturgy of John Chrysostom, 'Only Begotten Son and Word of God', was written by Justinian, for phrases in it are similar to those he used in the letter to pope John II shortly before he gave an order for the hymn to be sung in churches.⁶⁸ Later in the sixth century the Merovingian king Chilperic wrote hymns and masses, and whereas the tone in which a bishop describes his efforts is snaky there is no sense of surprise at his undertaking. Other emperors and empresses, although they did not write hymns, authorised their use in the liturgy. A story was told that during an earthquake in Constantinople in the fifth century a boy had been lifted into the air and instructed to tell the bishop and people to sing the hymn known as the Trisagion ('Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, Have mercy upon us'). The bishop ordered that this be done, whereupon the earthquake ceased. Pulcheria and Theodosius II soon ordered that it be sung throughout the world, and it is possible to trace some of the stages of its diffusion: It was chanted by the Eastern bishops and those with them at the end of the first session of the council of Chalcedon in 451, and the story of its miraculous origin was known to pope Felix III, who did not mention imperial involvement when he wrote of it to Peter of Antioch. The account we have of the introduction of the Trisagion specifies that it was to be sung without any addition, a detail that was probably added to exclude

the addition that another emperor, Anastasius, attempted to make early in the sixth century—‘who was crucified for us’. In a procedure that would have been unthinkable in Rome, the new phrase was introduced by two public servants standing in the pulpit of the cathedral in Constantinople. Whereas the innovation was not well received, the house of one of the two being burned down and the other going into hiding, the issue was the wording, for no-one seems to have questioned the right of the emperor to act in such a manner. Later in the century Justin II ordered that the creed that had been recited at Constantinople in 381 and received at Chalcedon in 451 was to be recited by the people before the Lord’s Prayer in every Catholic church. According to an author of the twelfth century, it also became established during the reign of that emperor that the hymn ‘Of your mystical body’ be sung, together with the Cherubic Hymn (‘We who mystically represent’), although the emperor is not credited with the innovation. Behind the different models the churches of Rome and Constantinople possessed for inaugurating changes to the Eucharistic liturgy lay sharply opposed notions of where authority lay.⁶⁹

Vigilius (29 March 537–7 June 555) differed from his predecessors in two ways, for he was experienced in the ways of the East, having represented the Roman church in Constantinople prior to becoming pope, and, as we have seen, he belonged to a family with a strong record of service to the state at high levels. His ability to give his niece Vigilia in marriage to Asterius, a man described as a consul, is another sign of the eminence of the family, for whereas Asterius cannot be identified with any ordinary consul he shared his name with the one who had worked on the text of Vergil while holding consular office in 494, and presumably came from the same family. Within a few years it was being said that Vigilius had arrested Asterius and had him beaten to death. One hopes this was not true, but before long the first signs of the savagery that was to characterise the Gothic war were appearing, in a way that must have shattered the new pope. Vigilius’s brother Reparatus was among the senators king Vitigis took as hostages when he withdrew from Rome towards the end of 536. Most of them were slaughtered, but Reparatus escaped, and in 538, after Goths had murdered the first praetorian prefect the Byzantine authorities had appointed in Italy, Reparatus succeeded him in office. But he made the mistake of being in Milan in 539 when the city was captured by Goths, who promptly murdered him in a brutal fashion. Vitigis had already demonstrated his loyalty to the Byzantines who had put him in office in a series of 60 prayers he wrote during and shortly after the siege of Rome by the Goths in 537–538, in which he sought the aid of God against enemies and then thanked Him for deliverance from them. When Vitigis, whom Vigilius had every reason to detest, was captured, the pope joined Belisarius in giving oaths that he would be taken in safety to Constantinople,

as indeed occurred. In September 540, two months after Belisarius had captured Ravenna from the Goths, Vigilius wrote to Justinian expressing satisfaction at his victories, asserting, in language that might have seemed out of place in earlier popes, that God had given him the mind of both an emperor and a bishop. In 545 he asked the bishop of Arles to pray continually for Justinian, Theodora, and Belisarius. He seems to have undertaken the restoration of works in the cemetery of Gordianus by the Via Salara destroyed by Goths, and it is possible that fragments of sculpture in the catacomb of SS Marcellinus and Peter that may be work of the mid-sixth century are to be associated with him.⁷⁰

Not surprisingly, the Byzantine administration in Italy showed every sign of good will towards the pope. It was through the hands of Vigilius that Belisarius offered to S Peter spoils he had won from the Vandals, among them a bejewelled gold cross weighing 100 lbs to which he had added an inscription describing his victories, an act of generosity that was to be long remembered, for among the treasures in the Lateran that were looted following the death of a pope late in the ninth century was one described as the famous gold cross that Belisarius had erected. Belisarius also made gifts to the needy, established accommodation for strangers on the Via Lata, and erected a monastery in a town on the Via Flaminia, appropriately dedicated to a saint of local renown. The general remained in Italy until 540, and would return there in 544; although his generous acts cannot be dated, they probably occurred during the earlier period. Whereas the non-Catholic sovereigns who had ruled Italy since 476 had often displayed goodwill towards the church, never had it taken such tangible forms. The benefactions of Belisarius may have been undertaken in a private capacity, and indeed may have been those of an ambitious person seeking to consolidate support. Nevertheless, the high regard which the leaders of the church and the state in Italy had for each other was plain for all to see.⁷¹

Co-operation between Vigilius and Belisarius at a later date is revealed by another source, although its interpretation is difficult. Most of the evidence that has come down to us gives the impression that popes spent all their time engaged in high ecclesiastical affairs. But bishops in late antiquity devoted a good deal of their energy to mundane tasks, such as that which a mutilated piece of papyrus obscurely shows Vigilius being engaged in. It tells the story of one Gudilla, the bearer of a Germanic name who decided to convert to the Catholic religion, together with his wife and sons; it may have been that Vigilius himself officiated at his reception. At some time Gudilla made a donation to a monastery in the town of Nepi, not far to the north of Rome. Afterwards he went to Rome and spoke to the pope and the bishop of the Goths, who gave him a legal document ordering that he receive a piece of property, and this was done. But after some time his land was occupied by the

sons of count Tzalicco, perhaps members of the Gothic army fighting the Byzantines. Years later, Gudilla informed Belisarius, as well as Vigilius, of the matter. The pope was enraged, and sent an official document on Gudilla's behalf. The form in which this story has come down to us doubtless makes it seem more complicated than it really was, but it allows us dimly to perceive Vigilius carrying out functions one suspects he would rather have left aside.⁷²

Vigilius also extended his patronage to Arator, a literary man. Orphaned when young, he had been cared for by bishop Laurentius of Milan. He may have seemed destined for a career among the clergy, but as he grew Arator was pulled in another direction, and a friend sternly told him that people who could not restrain their desires should get married, and that the time had come for him to produce offspring. We do not know whether he followed this advice, but after holding a number of official posts under the Goths Arator entered the clergy of Rome, becoming a subdeacon. His move away from secular life cannot be dated, but it may have occurred at around the time Vigilius became pope, and been part of a general reorientation that may have occurred then. On 13 April 544 Arator began a series of four public readings of the *Apostolic History*, a long poem he had written based on the Acts of the Apostles. A dedicatory poem addressed to Vigilius asks him, Arator's 'great father', to look upon it with love. Paul and Peter, whose achievements the poem recounts, were the traditional heroes of the Roman church, but the poem did more than recall a glorious past. Its first book closes at the point in the biblical narrative at which an angel freed Peter from prison, and reaches a rousing climax in lines that, in slightly different form, were inscribed on a wall of the church in which they were read out where all could see them: 'You will always be free. For what can those chains which touched the one who is able to absolve all things not achieve?... These walls will not be shattered by any enemy. He who opens the door among the stars shuts close the approach to wars.' The last line would later fascinate English authors, who imitated it, but the passage must have stirred his live audience. For Arator was reading in the church which came to be known as 'At the Chains of S Peter', as it contained the very chains that were believed to have fallen off the hands of Peter when the angel freed him from prison, and the awareness of being in the near presence of these powerful relics must have given those who heard Arator read these lines a frisson. After the poem had been read out over four days, a copy was placed in the archives of the church. The people of Rome may have been in particular need of cheering then, for the war against the Goths was going badly. Their enemy's cause had revived under the able leadership of a new king, Totila, who, at about this time, took the town of Tivoli, just to the east of Rome, and killed all its inhabitants, including the bishop. The themes of Arator's poem must have reflected the policies of Vigilius. But the pope's loyalty to the

Byzantines, so firmly grounded and frequently demonstrated, would be ill repaid.⁷³

Justinian's attempt to reconcile the opponents of the council of Chalcedon by means of the Theopaschite formula having failed, the restless emperor turned elsewhere. In 544 or the following year he issued an edict, which only survives in quotations in other texts, condemning the person and writings of bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia, the writings that bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus had directed against Cyril of Alexandria, and a letter written to one Mari that was attributed to bishop Ibas of Edessa. The subjects of the condemnation were referred to as the Three Chapters, or items. The three writers belonged to an environment that had in some ways been sympathetic to Nestorius, and Justinian, who was known for his eagerness to gather all people into one belief concerning Christ, hoped that by condemning them he could conciliate the Miaphysites who continued to reject the council of Chalcedon. The emperor moved with his customary haste, obtaining the support of the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. They may have feared that Justinian would turn against them as he had against Anthimus, although Menas of Constantinople, who had been ordained by Agapetus, made his support conditional on the approval of the pope. When Zoilus of Alexandria had second thoughts Justinian had him replaced. But hostility to the condemnation of the Chapters would be far stronger in the West. Whereas the three theologians had failed to make waves in the Latin-speaking world, a scholar in Gaul had been persuaded by the critique Theodoret mounted of Cyril. More importantly, the West was ever alert to attacks on the status of the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo.⁷⁴

Justinian counted on Vigilius to support his line. The pope's convictions are unclear, and a letter has come down to us in his name addressed to the then Miaphysite leaders Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus of Constantinople, and Severus of Antioch, claiming to believe the same as they did but asking them to keep this information secret. This does not appear to be authentic, for in the letter he wrote to Justinian in September 540 Vigilius had ratified an anti-Miaphysite edict issued four years previously; but even if a forgery, it indicates the murkiness of our sources for the period. Moreover, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Vigilius had done a deal with the empress Theodora, promising that when he became pope he would restore Menas's predecessor Anthimus to the see of Constantinople; but he reneged on his promise in words resonant with the language of past popes—'despite my unworthiness, I am the vicar of blessed Peter the apostle.'⁷⁵ Neither was he popular within Rome, for the people made formal complaints against him to Constantinople, accusing him of striking a secretary with such force that he collapsed dead at his feet and having been responsible for the murder of the consul who had

married his niece. A sequence of prayers Vigilius composed for use in the mass commemorating the anniversary of his ordination in 537 never got beyond eight. For whatever reason, a decision was taken to bring him to Constantinople, and on 22 November 545, while he was celebrating the feast day of S Cecilia in the church dedicated to her in Trastevere, he was arrested. The Byzantine state specialised in such dramatic acts: On 22 January 563 a force entered the quarters of the patriarch Eutychios of Constantinople while he was serving the liturgy in the palace of Hormisdas, but only arrested him after it was completed. The pope was taken straight to the river and put on a ship. A throng of people is said to have followed him, asking him to pray for them. But as the ship took off the crowd began to shout: 'Take your hunger with you! Take your deaths with you! You did evil to the Romans; may you find evil where you are going!'⁷⁶

Vigilius's journey was delayed in Sicily, where he was able to perform the customary December ordination of priests and deacons and make the arrangements for the governance of the church in his absence that his hasty departure had prevented him from attending to earlier. He despatched to Rome a priest, Amphiliatus, who would be in charge of the papal household, together with bishop Valentine of the nearby church of Silva Candida, but the outcome of their trip was not happy. Rome was then being besieged by the Goths, and in a gesture of goodwill Vigilius sent ships laden with grain with Amphiliatus and Valentine. But as they drew near to Rome they fell into the hands of Goths, who killed all the crew, and when Valentine had been brought before Totila the king ordered that his hands be cut off. While in Sicily, Vigilius met bishop Datius of Milan, who had taken up residence in Constantinople at some time after the violent occupation of his city by Gothic forces in 539. Having travelled back to the West, he apprised the pope of developments concerning the Three Chapters. He also received from Zoilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, an explanation that he had been coerced into condemning the Chapters. Finally, an imperial summons came allowing him to resume his journey. He sailed to the Peloponnesos, whence he travelled overland. From Thessaloniki he wrote threatening Menas, the patriarch whom Agapetus had ordained in happier times, with excommunication for accepting the condemnation of the Chapters. He arrived in Constantinople after a most protracted journey, probably on 25 January 547.⁷⁷ People in Rome, however, liked to think of him as having entered the city on the preceding Christmas Eve, exchanging solemn kisses with Justinian, and making his way to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia, then just a few years old. They imagined him preceded by a crowd singing a hymn in Latin, reported as being 'Behold, there comes the ruler, the lord, etc.' The words are part of those that introduce the introit for the feast of the Epiphany (6 January) in the Roman rite, which say of Christ: 'Behold, there

comes the Ruler, the Lord, and the kingdom, the power and the empire are in his hand.' The feast had originated in the East, where it celebrated the baptism of Christ, but in the West it had become associated with the visit of the Magi to the infant Christ. Whereas John and Silverius had been cast as Christ at the time of his passion, the language that was used of Vigilius at the beginning of his sojourn in the East was far more upbeat. But his situation would change, and the degree to which he bore culpability for this remains difficult to determine.⁷⁸

The pope settled into the palace of Placidia, the traditional base of Roman ambassadors, and refused to share communion with Menas.⁷⁹ But he began to soften. Whatever had passed between him and Theodora compromised his position; the capture of Rome by Totila in December 546 weakened his home base, and on 29 June 547, the day of the feast of Peter and Paul, he and Menas were reconciled. Vigilius then committed a foolish and fatal error, writing to Justinian that he would condemn the Three Chapters. The emperor wisely put away the document, which was in the pope's own handwriting. Vigilius then sent to Menas a judgment condemning the Chapters on 11 April 548, the eve of Easter. The document was a triumph of diplomacy over principle, which its author later defended as having been issued in accordance with the needs of the moment, as a kind of medicine. The outcry that followed took him by surprise. In 550 the bishops of Africa took the astonishing step of holding a synod at which they declared themselves out of communion with the pope. In March Vigilius wrote to the bishop of Tomis, a town on the west coast of the Black Sea, telling him not to believe false things that were being said of him and in particular not to pay attention to what was being said by Rusticus and Sebastian, whom he had suspended from communion. As they were two deacons from Rome who had been members of Vigilius's entourage in Constantinople, and the former was his own nephew, he was clearly sustaining losses close to home. In April he assured the bishop of Arles of his fidelity to the decrees of earlier popes and the faith of the four great councils, and asked him to tell the bishops not to be disturbed by any pieces of false writing or mendacious words that were circulating. When the pope arrived in Constantinople, potential reconciliation with the Miaphysites had been at the top of Justinian's agenda, but Vigilius was now trying to contain the fallout in the West.⁸⁰

Finding himself in a dreadful situation, Vigilius acted in a way that worsened matters. On 15 August 550 he swore in writing that he would be of one mind with Justinian and seek to have the Three Chapters anathematised; the oath would be kept secret and Justinian would protect Vigilius if need be. Plans for an ecumenical council that would settle the matter began, and the emperor began to purge the African hierarchy of its troublesome bishops. But

in July 551 Justinian issued an Exposition of the Orthodox Faith in which he condemned the Three Chapters; buried within it was a sly dig at the recent history of the church of Rome, pointing to the case of Dioscorus, who had been anathematised after he died.⁸¹ His unilateral act left Vigilius in an awkward position, and in the following month he and other Western bishops who were in Constantinople deposed Theodore Ascidas, the emperor's theological adviser, and excommunicated the patriarch Menas. This was a brave act on the part of a man who had hitherto displayed much weakness, and he decided to withdraw from the palace of Placidia to a church dedicated to S Peter. Justinian's response was fierce. Despite the protection Byzantine law provided for those who fled to churches, the praetor of the people, an official whose functions were those of policing, entered the church at the head of a band of soldiers with naked swords and drawn bows. Vigilius grabbed the columns that held up the altar table, but while members of the clergy were being pulled out of the building by their hair and people tugged at the pope's feet, beard, and hair, the altar collapsed, whereupon the intruders retreated.⁸² Justinian changed his tactics, and before long Vigilius received some unexpected visitors. An old ally from happier times, Belisarius, the most senior member of the Roman senate, Cethegus, and the emperor's nephew, Justin, were among a group who arrived, and swore that the pope would be safe if he returned to the quarters where he had been staying. Vigilius did so, but it quickly became apparent that he was really being held in confinement, and on the night before Christmas Eve he eluded the guards and fled across the Bosphorus to the church of S Euphemia. It was a significant location, for the shrine, already prominent when visited by a Western pilgrim in the late fourth century, had been the site of the council of Chalcedon at which Theodoret, one of the three villains Justinian was attacking, had been vindicated, and that the Westerners saw themselves as upholding.⁸³ On 28 January 552 he was visited again by Belisarius and other dignitaries, but this time he decided to stay put. In June Theodore, Menas, and the other bishops Vigilius had excommunicated came to see him, and having come to an agreement with them he returned to the city and was received in a kindly way by Justinian. But a few months later, Menas died, and was immediately succeeded by someone who had caught the emperor's eye and would faithfully support him rather than the pope Eutychios.

In January 553 Eutychios, with the support of other patriarchs and prominent bishops, formally proposed to Vigilius that an ecumenical council be held to deal with the can of worms that the controversy over the Chapters had opened up. Vigilius was initially delighted, and sought large Western participation, but Justinian would not countenance this, and of the 166 bishops who attended its various sessions nine were from Africa, and the same number

from Dacia and Macedonia. Whereas it was the largest Western contingent ever to have attended such a council, it was scarcely large, and those from Africa are likely to have been recently appointed by Justinian. It was clear that the bishops were expected to act in accordance with the will of the emperor, although he did not attend its sessions. Neither did Vigilius. On 1 May the trusty Belisarius had led another group that invited him to attend, but the pope, realising that the result of the council was a foregone conclusion without large-scale participation of the Westerners who would be likely to support the Chapters, refused. On 14 May, while the council was in session, Vigilius produced an enormous work called the *Constitutum*, in which he condemned some of the teachings but not the person of Theodoret, and refused to anathematise Theodore or Ibas; indeed, he made it clear that no-one else was to condemn Theodore. The subscription of Vigilius was followed by those of 14 Western bishops who had by then joined him in Constantinople, not one of whom attended the council, and who may be thought of as forming a kind of synod in exile. Predictably, the gesture of defiance was futile. On 25 May Vigilius asked Belisarius, Cethegus, Justin, and some high-ranking bishops to convey the document to the council, but it was their turn to be difficult, and they departed from him without the document. Justinian forthwith demanded that the council delete Vigilius's name from the list of those whose names were commemorated in the liturgy, and on 26 May moved decisively by producing the secret letter Vigilius had sent to him in 550 in which he promised to condemn the Chapters. Vigilius's credibility having been totally destroyed, in its final session on 2 June the council duly anathematised the person of Theodore, some of the writings of Theodoret, and the letter of Ibas. The terms in which they did so were no more than an expansion of an anathema Justinian had already issued.

The council had caused bitter division among those Justinian had hoped would act in concert, and there was more than one way of looking at those who participated in it. The biographer of patriarch Eutychios of Constantinople claimed that this was the only council ever to have been attended by four patriarchs, among whose number it included Vigilius. He thought of them as having come together like one body made up of four elements, having been all of one mind, having celebrated the Eucharist together in the Great Church, and having resembled the four rivers that flowed out of paradise. When it was finished, each joyfully departed for his own city. It is hard to imagine an account less sympathetic to the ordeals of Vigilius. An African author, however, was scathing of leaders of the church Justinian had brought together: Vigilius of Rome had been ordained while Silverius had still been alive, Apollinaris of Alexandria had been promoted while Zoilus was still alive, Eustochius of Jerusalem had been made a bishop while Macarius had been

away, while Eutychios of Constantinople had become bishop as a substitute for Menas. Only Domninus of Antioch escaped reproach. To the extent that the former account reflected the attitude of the imperial government, it pointed to attitudes likely to cause problems in the future, whereas the second hinted that resistance to the condemnation of the Chapters would continue.⁸⁴

In the meantime, Vigilius had been comprehensively defeated. He attempted to salvage some dignity when he wrote to the patriarch Eutychios on 8 December 553 saying that the Devil had caused a misunderstanding, and that he had reconsidered his position, just as Augustine had when he produced his *Retractions*. But as so often he had failed to judge his audience. Such concessions as he offered were not enough, and on 23 February he produced a second *Constitutum*, totally overthrowing the first, in which he accepted the decrees of the council condemning the Three Chapters, without, however, confirming the council itself. His humiliation lasted until the end. When Justinian issued the Pragmatic Sanction regulating life in the newly conquered Italy on 13 August 554 it was ostensibly at Vigilius's request, but unless a word such as 'bishop' had fallen out, the expression that was used of him, 'the venerable Vigilius of the elder Rome', attributed no office to him, and in mentioning his 'petition' the emperor used a term often used for requests from junior people. According to a later Byzantine author, Justinian then simply dismissed the pope. His misfortunes lasted until his end, for while making his return to Italy Vigilius was afflicted with gallstones, and died in Sicily. His body was taken back to Rome, but not to join those of his recent predecessors in St Peter's, for in a final insult it was interred outside the city, in the catacomb of Priscilla.⁸⁵

The death of Vigilius brought to an end an undignified period in the history of the church. He was a weak man, yet the threats he experienced would have tested someone much braver. The twists and turns of his interactions with Justinian may have been influenced by developments in the war between the Goths and the Byzantines that was being fought at the time in Italy. A few years after he arrived in the royal city Vigilius was among those Romans there who urged Justinian to prosecute the war with vigour,⁸⁶ but his loyalty may have done his cause no good, for the defeat and death of king Totila in the summer of 552, and the death in battle of his successor Theia later in the year, would have made Justinian less concerned for the opinions of people in the West and more inclined to steamroll their opposition to his policies. But the war had other results, one of which was a major reorientation of the church of Rome.

Pope Symmachus had battled against most of the senators to establish his position as pope, and in the following decades members of the senate continued to play an important role in the life of the church and to take

theology seriously. Those who attended the rowdy council attended by Boethius and his father-in-law Symmachus at which a letter from eastern bishops was read, described by the former as a herd of the unlearned, must have included many laity who enjoyed a good discussion of theology. At a difficult period in his dealings with Hormisdas, the emperor Anastasius had written to the senate, asking it to use its influence with the king and pope in the interests of the peace of the church, and duly received a reply. In 530 the dying Felix IV told a group of priests, deacons, senators, and patricians who his successor would be, to which the senate responded by informing the priests, deacons, and all the clergy that it was wrong for the ordination of a new pope to be dealt with while a pope was alive. The senate apparently felt that it was within its competence to issue such a directive, and following the death of Boniface II it issued a formal *senatus consultum* to regulate the elections of popes. After John II had conceded ground to Justinian, he addressed a curious letter to 11 high-ranking laymen that begins with an explanation as to why he had not been in touch earlier, goes on to express approbation of the faith of Justinian, and warns them not have contact with the excommunicated Sleepless Monks, in terms that suggest such contact may have been occurring. Among the people to whom the letter was addressed was Liberius, who, in his capacity as praetorian prefect of the Gauls, had recently attended a council presided over in 529 by Caesarius of Arles in the town of Orange, on the occasion of the dedication of a basilica Liberius had built. Unlike most of the councils held in Gaul, this one dealt with belief rather than practice, for in opposition to doctrines that had been current in Gaul it confirmed the teachings of Augustine on grace. Strong traditions in Gaul had opposed these, one author going so far as to write of the poison of the African disease. Whereas different manuscripts present the subscriptions in varying forms, it seems clear that the eight members of the laity who attended, led by Liberius, consented, as well as subscribed, to its proceedings.⁸⁷ People outside Rome assumed that senators could get things done. Bishop Avitus of Vienne wrote to two of them, Faustus and Symmachus, on behalf of pope Symmachus, and would later ask the senator Senarius for information on an embassy Hormisdas had sent to the East. The biographers of bishop Caesarius of Arles describe that bishop as being received on a visit to Rome by the senate and prominent individuals, the pope and the clergy, and the ordinary people, in that order, and as being presented (by whom, one wonders) to pope Symmachus, the senators, and their wives.⁸⁸

Yet the prominent role of senators in the life of the Roman church would scarcely outlast the first third of the sixth century. The ferocity of the Gothic war, foreshadowed by the murder of Vigilius's brother, was a blow to their numbers, their morale, and the estates from which they derived their wealth,

and the arrival of Lombards a few decades later exacerbated their woes. Early in the century it had been claimed that a person who studied rhetoric would soon command the world, and shortly before the outbreak of the Gothic War Cassiodorus had contrasted the lack of teachers of the Bible in Rome with a widespread enthusiasm for secular letters, and co-operated with pope Agapetus in an attempt to establish a form of explicitly Christian education. Such a situation would have been unthinkable shortly thereafter. At one point in the great work he wrote in prison, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius had asked a rhetorical question: ‘Where do the bones of loyal Fabricius now rest?’ He was employing the poetic convention known as *Ubi sunt?* (‘Where are they?’) that was used to refer to people and things of the distant past. In a difficult moment in the 590s, Gregory I used the same convention, but he applied it not to someone who had lived in the third century before Christ, but to the senate and people, the two terms that had been traditionally used to describe the government of Rome: ‘Where is the senate? Where now is the people? Their bones have wasted away.’ In some parts of Italy, things were different. A bishop of Ravenna in dispute with a pope was able to mobilise support from senior laypeople. After a bishop of Naples had been removed from office civic conflict ensued within the city on such a scale that nearly two years passed before his successor could be installed. But in Rome, such conflicts were a thing of the past. It would be in a stripped-down form that the city faced its future, with the church at its centre.⁸⁹

Notes

- 1 Disputed elections are discussed by Wirbelauer (1994). Make me bishop: Praetextus, quoted by Jerome, *con Ioh Hier* 8 (*PL* 23: 361). Honorius’s decree: Boniface, *ep.* 10 (*PL* 20: 768).
- 2 Leo: *ep.* 10.4, 6; 40. Châlons-sur-Saône and Bourges: Sidonius Apollinaris, *ep.* 4.25, 7.9.2f.
- 3 *Epit. chron.* 1309 (on Xystus), 1341 (Leo; *MGH AA* 9: 473, 478).
- 4 Symmachus: *LP*, 53.1, and *apol adv Anast* (Thiel p. 702); Victor of Vita, *hist pers.* 1.13 (Vandals); Theophanes, *chron*, 5993 (deacon). Laurentius: *MGH AA* 12: 410, no. 1. Esau and Jacob: Ennodius, *lib.* 29 (*MGH AA* 7: 52f).
- 5 The Laurentian schism has attracted a lot of writing; see Moorhead (1993): 114–39; Mele and Spaccapelo (2000); Diefenbach (2007): 473–81; Sessa (2012). Some issues remain unclear, in particular the dating of the second and third councils. Partisan accounts are provided by *LP*, 53.2–5, and the so-called Laurentian Fragment (ed. Duchesne, pp. 46–8). Council of 499: *MGH AA* 12: 399–415. Relevance of events of 418: Ennodius, *lib.* 109 (*MGH AA* 7: 63). Gelasius: *ep.* 30.6 (ed. Thiel, p. 440). Ursinus to Naples: *LP*, 39.1. Theoderic in Rome: anon vales, 65 (*MGH AA* 9: 324). Honorius: Claudian, *sext cons Hon*, 543–46, but see already Pliny, *pan.* 22. Constantius: Ammianus Marcellinus, 16.10.3.

- 6 Charges: *laur frag*, 3f, 6. Spiritual daughters: *PL* 63: 80. Damasus: *LP*, 39.3. Throngs of women: Ennodius, *lib pro syn*, 65 (*MGH AA* 7: 58). See e.g. *Cod. theod.* 16.2.44, of 420. Quarrels: Ammianus Marcellinus, 14.6.2. Priests: *LP*, 53.5.
- 7 Ordaining: Pelagius I, *ep* 24, p. 76. John Chrysostom: *SChr* 342: 94. Eutyches: Leo, *ep*, 25; that the letter is preserved among the letters of Leo suggests that Peter sent Leo a copy of his reply.
- 8 Documents relating to synod: *MGH AA* 12: 419–37. Constantine: *LP*, 34.22. Theoderic: *anon val* 69f (*MGH AA* 9: 324); the church is discussed by Brandenburg (2005): 103–8. Javelins: Ennodius, *lib pro syn*, 50 (*MGH AA* 7: 56).
- 9 Visitor: *laur frag*, 6; *LP*, 53.3f. Bishops celebrate Easter: Conc Lyons (583), c. 5 (*CCSL* 148A: 232). End of century: Gregory I, *ep*, 1.42. Gelasius: *ep*, 15.4 (ed. Thiel, p. 380).
- 10 Council: *MGH AA* 12: 438–55. Testamentary provision: Sessa (2012): 223 with n. 79. Moreau (2006): 83f, n.28 cites much evidence for difficulties posed by the wealth of the church. Later pope: Agapitus, writing to Caesarius of Arles in 535: *MGH Ep* 3: 55.
- 11 Portraits: Picard (1988): 507f, yet Symmachus is credited with having undertaken work at S Paul's (*LP*, 53.8).
- 12 Chapels: *LP*, 53.7, with 48.2–5. Bishop of Milan: Ennodius, *ep*, 3.10.3, 4.11.2; 6.15.2; 6.33.2f; cf on Theoderic's court *pan.* 58 (*MGH AA* 7: 210). Accepted money: *laur frag*, 14. Symmachus's ordinations: *LP*, 53.12; predecessors, 50.5, 51.7, 52.3. Treasury: Sessa (2012): 99f on *MGH AA* 12: 426 l.1 Bribery: *laur frag* 2. Accommodation: *LP*, 53.10. Support from the needy: Simonnot (2005): 169f. Gregory: *hev* 40 (*CCSL* 141: 394ff). Lupercalia: Gelasius mentions *vilas trivialesque personas, abiectos et infimos* (*coll avel* 100.16). *Liber Pontificalis*: ed. Mommsen, p. 122.
- 13 Theoderic: *laur frag* 12f; *MGH AA* 12: 392. Paschasius: Gregory, *dial*, 4.42, emphasising the decision of bishops rather than Theoderic. Succeeding pope: *LP*, 54.1 (*composuit clerum*).
- 14 *Beatus*: *LP*, 53.4 (twice), 5.
- 15 Slaves of hell Ennodius: *lib pro syn* 9 (*MGH AA* 7: 50). Passions: Lanéry, in Philippart (2010): 161–77.
- 16 Sixtus: ed. Wirbelauer (1993): 266ff.
- 17 First see; *PL* 6: 20. Liberius: *PL* 8: 1391, 95. During the Easter vigil of 404, clergy faithful to John Chrysostom had baptised in the baths built by the same emperor: Palladius, *Dial.*, 9 (*SChr* 341: 192–96).
- 18 Pope Anastasius: *LP*, 52.2; *laur frag* 51. Festus: Theodore Anagnostes, *HE*, 461. Representatives of Alexandria: *coll avel* 102, p. 468. *Liber Pontificalis* on Festus, and other senators: 53.3, 5. *Curia a cruore dicitur*: *PL* 8: 828. Schäfer (1991): 227–398 gives an exhaustive account of the supporters of each side. Note, however, that a letter of bishop Avitus of Vienne addressed to Faustus albus and Symmachus need not entail their having been adherents of pope Symmachus (asserted p. 231); cf Chadwick (1981): 9.
- 19 Symmachus's letter: *ep*, 10, ed. Thiel, p. 700ff, with *LP*, 53.5 on Manichaeans in Rome. With *memento te hominem*, (p. 703), cf Tertullian *apol.* 33.4 (*PL* 1: 511); Jerome *ep.* 39.2, and Hosius of Cordoba writing to Constantius: *PL* 8: 1330.
- 20 *LP*, 53.6–10 (some of the language is confusing). List of martyrs: Kennedy (1938): 48. Silvester and Martin: *LP*, 53.9; *laur frag*, 15, with Davis-Weyer and Emerick (1984). Ninth century: John the deacon, *Vita Gregorii*, 4.68.

- 21 Background: Ennodius, ep. 8.33; *LP*, 54.1 (however, the town was in Latium not Campania). Birth of Silverius: *LP*, 60.1 (*natione Campanus*). Role in synod: *MGH AA* 12: 444–46. Future pope: below, p. 161f, with Schröder (2007); 366f, and 195f. Augustine: ep. 213 (*PL* 33: 966–68). Epiphanius: Ennodius, *V Epi*, 27 (*MGH AA* 7: 87). Caesarius: *V Caes*, 1.13 (*MGH SRM* 3: 461). Clergyman and man of the world: *Et urbanus et clericus*: Ennodius, writing to Hormisdas when still a deacon, ep. 7.12. Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 274 n. 25.
- 22 *LP*, 54.3f; *coll avel*, 115, 125.
- 23 Embassies, *LP*, 54.2–4, with *coll avel*, 126f. With the fate of the emperor (*nutu divinitatis percussus est*, *LP*, 54.4), compare that of the pope (*nutu divino percussus est*, 52.2).
- 24 Chadwick (2001): 610.
- 25 Fasts: Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.7.7–11; *Secret History*, 13.29f, although such practice was not extraordinary among emperors; cf Ambrose *obit val*, 16 for the case of Valentinian II.
- 26 Embassy: *LP*, 54.5–8; *coll avel*, 141ff. Dioscorus: *coll avel*, 175.2.
- 27 Letter of Dioscorus: *coll avel*, 216.6 (*CSEL* 35: 675f); see too a letter from Hormisdas's legates, 217.8–12 (687f). Leo: *tract*, 96.1. Faustus: *CCSL* 85: 137–41. Dionysius: *coll avel*, 102, p. 473.23f. The treatment of these matters by Schurr (1935) has never been bettered. Justinian's letters: *coll avel*, 187, 188, 191. Go away: *ACO* 4: 46–62. Word sent: *coll avel*, 236f.
- 28 Gundobad: Cassiodorus, *var*, 1.45f ('things that gave pleasure' from 1.45.1). Clovis: *var*, 2.40.17. Papal gifts: Gregory, ep. 14.12; Bede, *HE*, 2.11.
- 29 Valentinian: *LP*, 46.4. Clovis: 54.10, although Hormisdas became pope six years after Clovis died. But no name is given in the Felecian epitome; perhaps the name of a famous king was inappropriately added to the primitive account. For comparable behaviour, cf the emperor Maurice offering to God a crown he had been given (Theophanes, *chron*, 6093). Justin: 54.10, 55.7. Justinian: 58.2, with ed. Thiel, pp. 877, 950. Theoderic: *LP*, 54.10.
- 30 *LP*, p. 274, n. 25.
- 31 The works of Boethius referred to here are edited by Moreschini. On the date of Boethius's work supporting the Theopaschites, Schurr (1935): 224f. Manuscript: Schanz (1920): 152. Bishop in Gaul: Avitus of Vienne, ep. 39 (*MGH AA* 6/2: 68). Synod: *MGH AA* 12: 402. Submission: Thiel, p. 697.
- 32 The key accounts are anon vales, 88–93, with 86 on the charge against Boethius (*MGH AA* 9: 328) and *LP*, 55.1–6, with Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 4.8 (*PG* 20:1157) and Sozomen, *HE*, 2.15 on Constantine, and Victor of Vita, *Historia*, 2.4 on Huneric. John's companions: Moorhead 1993: 238–40; that none of them is subsequently mentioned suggests a sad end. Chronicler: Marcellinus comes, 525 (*MGH AA* 11: 102). Caesarius of Arles: *V Caes*, 1.26 (*MGH SRM* 3: 466); similar was the case of John Chrysostom (Sozomen, *HE*, 8.1.8). Emperor returning: Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *Books*, 1.191f, R 493f, HC 631, 647. Ninth century: *LPR*, 39. Vitiello (2005) discusses John being treated as S Peter. Coronation: Theophanes, *chron*, 6019. Easter liturgy: Marcellinus comes, *chron*, as above. Greek text: *Prophetarum Vitae*, p. 151 (mistakenly seeing it as Christmas). Cold winds: Boethius, *cons phil*, 1.4.36. Martyr: *LP*, 55.5, with Gregory of Tours, *glor mart*, 38. Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 278 n. 15.
- 33 The different versions are most easily compared in Mommsen's edition of the *LP* (pp. 133–37) and Davis's translation (pp. 51f, 113f).

- 34 Leo: *cuius vice fungimur* (*tract* 3.4). Gelasius: ed. Thiel, p. 440.
- 35 For centuries: In 314 Gallic bishops meeting at Arles addressed the bishop of Rome as ‘*papa* Silvester’ and ‘most glorious *papa*’ (CCSL 148: 4. 1.10); they also greet him as ‘dearest brother’ (ibid 17f, 24f). A law issued in the name of Valentinian III in 425 refers to the *venerabilis papa* (*cod. theod.* 16.5.62; Dovere (2010) interprets the term in the light of Valentinian’s youthfulness, perhaps wrongly. Clovis: *Orate pro me, domini sancti et apostolica sede dignissimi pappae* (MGH Leg 2/1: 2.9; not an example of good Latin.) Irish: *papa noster*, Cumman, *ep.*, 1.208f, with note. On changes in usage in Rome, Moorhead (1985).
- 36 Vacancy: LP, 55.8. Three days: *Liber Diurnus*, p. 121. For ordinations being limited to Sundays, taken to include Saturday nights, see Leo *ep.* 6.6, 9.1. 10.6, implicitly corroborated by *Collectio Avellana* 14 (CSEL 35: 59). Ordination: LP, 56.1, with Cassiodorus, *var.* 8.16. Symmachus is described as *caput senati* (sic) by *anon vales*, 92 (MGH AA 9: 328). Destroyed in prison: LP, 55.6.
- 37 Felix: LP, 56.2. Just inside walls: Miller (2000): 18, whose explanation for the phenomenon is unpersuasive. Symmachus: LP, 53.9. The placing of churches in the forum area would continue, but became much more pronounced in the Carolingian period: Reekmans (1989): 876–78. Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.6.5–8 (Cosmas and Damian), 1.4.28 (Theodore). Sporacius, consul in 452, had erected a church dedicated to S Theodore, where he was buried: *Greek Anthology* 1.6f; Justinian, *nov.* 3.1. There is no reason to see the cult of Cosmas and Damian as having passed from Constantinople to Rome via Ravenna, as suggested by Kennedy (1938): 137–40. The cult is discussed by Brenk (2006), who nevertheless overemphasises the role of Theod-eric, and oddly believes that Theoderic saw Theodore as his patron. Osborne (2008) speculatively sees memories of the treasure Vespasian brought from Jerusalem to the Temple of Peace in an inscription and images of the church. See on the church Brandenburg (2005: 222–24) and Caillet (2011: 159).
- 38 LP, 57, with Duchesne’s n. 4, and LP, 44 on Boniface I. Eastern view: Mansi, 9: 263.
- 39 As does Chadwick (2001): 653 n.28. Similarly, the father of the Pelagius who became pope in 579 bore the name Unigild (LP, 57.1); a priest named Smaragdus attended a Roman synod in 495 (*coll avel*, 103.2 (CSEL 35: 474.14)). East: Acts of the Council of Constantinople, 1: 158.
- 40 John: LP, 58; the phrase *de Caeliomonte* could indicate that Proiectus came from the Celian, or merely the location of the church of S Clemente where Mercurius served as priest. Bishops named Mercurius: MGH AA 12: 497 (s.v.). Fourth century: Ambrose, *ep.* 75A.22.
- 41 Letters: Cassiodorus, *v ar.* 9.15f. Pelagius: LP, 62.3. Bodyguard: Evagrius, *HE*, 2.2.
- 42 Chalcedon: ed. Alberigo, p. 138. 469; *cod iust*, 1.3.30. Later: PL 56: 896–98. Justinian: *nov.* 123.2f. High official: Cassiodorus, *var.* 11.2.2.
- 43 Justinian and John: *cod iust*, 1.1.8. Theupaschite view: PL 143: 950B. Sleepless monks: Liberatus, *brev.* 20 (PL 68: 136). Hilary: LP, 48.1. Simplicius: *coll avel*, 58 (CSEL 55: 131f).
- 44 Statute: Justinian, *nov.* 9. Gifts: LP, 58.2.
- 45 LP, 59. Deacon: MGH AA 12: 443 (no. 4). Letters: MGH Ep 3: 56f; PL 66: 43–45, 38–41.
- 46 LP, 59, with LP 66: 50 (letter to Jerusalem). A similar understanding in Theophanes, *chron.* 6029. Victor of Tunnuna sees Anthimius as an enemy of the council of Chalcedon: *chron.* 540.1 (MGH AA 11: 199.) Boasts: PL 66: 50.

- 47 Dante: *para*, 6: 13–21.
- 48 Liberatus, *brev*, 21 (*PL* 68: 1039); the colourful beginning is taken too seriously by Hofmann (1991). In Rome: *PL*, 66: 26; Mansi, 8: 849. On bishops not moving, council of Nicaea, c 15 (ed. Alberigo et al., 27f), with e.g. Leo, ep. 14.8. Note too *auct marc*, 535.2 (*MGH AA* 11: 104).
- 49 Odd report: Cassiodorus, *var*, 12.20. Eastern source: Pseudo-Zacharias, *HE*, 9.15, 19 (*CSCO Scriptores Syri* 5: 84, 93f).
- 50 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 27–31.
- 51 Millar (2009): 96–9.
- 52 I draw on the edition of the Vulgate by B. Fischer, 1983, p. 1515f, and *LP*, ed. Mommsen, p. 1. Gregory deceived: he uses pseudo-Jerome (*PL* 30: 304f) to defend the practice of the Roman church in singing Alleluia (ep. 9. 26).
- 53 According to Duchesne, a first edition, no longer extant, was written in the pontificate of Hormisdas, capable of being reconstructed on the basis of two shortened versions of it. A later author wrote all the lives until that of Felix IV, and work on a second edition was begun during the pontificate of Boniface. This was updated by contemporaries until the pontificate of Silverius, whose deeds are described by two authors with opposing views of him. Geertman (2009) sees a first redaction having been made after the pontificate of John II, but whatever conclusions very lively current scholarship settles on are not likely to change the summary given here. Mommsen's argument that two editions were written during the seventh century is not convincing, for whereas its style may be closer to that of Fredegarius than that of some authors of the sixth century (his edition, p. xviii), it is also closer to that of Benedict of Nursia than that of papal correspondence of the seventh century. Noble (1985b): 354–56 discusses the part of the papal administration that produced it.
- 54 Chalcedon: *LP*, 47.3 (but see what immediately precedes this; cf for the real number *Acts of Council* 3: 193–201). Symmachus: *LP*, 53.4 (cf *MGH AA* 12: 399–401, 405–410).
- 55 Agapitus: *LP* 59.3. Vigilius: *LP* 61.6.
- 56 Marcellinus: *PL* 6: 11–20; *LP* 30.
- 57 *LP*, 60; the Cononian Epitome does not mention Theodahad as having been bribed, and a chronicle makes him alone responsible (*auct marc*, 536.5, *MGH AA* 11: 104). Silverius, Vitigis, and Belisarius: Procopius, *Wars*, 5.11.26, 14.4f.
- 58 Cassiodorus, *var* 10.10 from Amalasuintha (whose subsequent death some attributed to Theodora: Procopius, *Secret History*, 16.4–5), 10.20 from Theodahad, 10.21 from Gudelina, 10.23 from Theodahad, and 10.24 from Gudelina; it is noteworthy that three of these letters were from women.
- 59 Theodora writes: *LP*, 60.6 John: *PLRE* 2: 609f (Iohannes 67). Reparatus: *PLRE* 2: 939f (Reparatus 1). Written undertaking: Victor of Tunnuna, *chron*, 542.1 (*MGH AA* 11: 200f). 700 lbs of gold: Liberatus, *brev*, 22 (*PL* 68: 1039).
- 60 Boethius: *cons phil*, 1.4.26. Two officials: Liberatus, *brev*, 22. Porta Asinaria: Procopius, *Wars*, 5.14.14; 7.20.15. Proba: Procopius, *Wars*, 3.2.27.
- 61 *LP*, 60.6–9; Liberatus, *brev*, 22 (*PL* 68: 1039f); Procopius, *Secret History*, 1.14, 27 (implying that an agent of Antonina murdered him). Procopius has Silverius being sent to Greece before Vigilius was appointed (*Wars*, 5.25.13). Transport of marble: Cassiodorus, *var*, 3.10.2.

For the use of curtains, Osborne (1992) with Nordhagen (1968, plate IVA).

- 62 Justinian: c. *ons. iust.*, 1.1.7, 1.10, issued in 530. Poet: Paul the silentiary, *Decriptio Sanctae Sophiae* (ed. C. De Stephani, 2011) 145, 164–67.
- 63 *Acts of the Council*, 3: 202.
- 64 Nov. 6.
- 65 Nov. 133.6.
- 66 Difficult problem: Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.1.65. Consecrations: John Malalas, 486; Theophanes, *chron*, 6030. Prima Justiniana: Justinian, *nov* 11; *coll avel*, 88.13 (Agapetus responds), *nov* 131.3 (Vigilius).
- 67 *LP*, 1.6 (Peter, with Gregory I, ep. 9.26); 7.2 (Alexander); 8.2 (Sixtus); 9.2 (Telesphorus, with 53.11 for Symmachus); 45.1 (Celestine); 47.8 (Leo); 51.6 (Gelasius; see further above p. 39); 66.3 (Gregory, with Bede, *HE*, 2.1, ed. Plummer p. 78; John the deacon also credits him with introducing the Kyrie eleison, *V Greg*, 2.20); 86.14 (Sergius).
- 68 Grumel (1928); Uthemann is cautious on the authorship of the hymn (1999: 38). Theophanes notes Justinian ordering that the hymn be sung in churches under the years 535–536 (*chron*, 6028), to be preferred to Nicephorus Callistus, who believed he composed it after the council of 553 (*HE* 17.28, *PG* 147: 292).
- 69 Chilperic: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 6.46. Trisagion: Theophanes, *chron*, 5930, with *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 1: 364, and Felix III, (*ep*. 3, *PL* 58: 909). Anastasius: Marcellinus comes, sa 512.2 (*MGH AA* 11: 97). Justin II: John of Biclaro, *chron*, s.a. 567?.2 (*MGH AA* 11: 211); George Cedrenos, *Hist. Comp*, Bonn edn, p. 684f.
- 70 Constantinople: *LP*, 60.6; Sotinel (1992) is generally useful. Vigilia: *LP*, 61.3. Prayers: Chavasse (1950, 1952); Bastiaensen (1985). Vitigis: *LP*, 61.1. Letter to Justinian: *PL* 69:22. Bishop of Arles: *MGH Ep* 3: 62. Restoration: Augenti (1991): 59–95 (tentative).
- 71 *LP*, 61.2; 112.6.
- 72 Tjäder, *Papyri*, no. 49 (p. 198).
- 73 Early life: Ennodius, *dict*, 9.17f (p. 114); *ep* 9.1. Dedicatory poem: lines 27f (*CCSL* 130: 215). Always be free: lines 1072–76, (303; on the inscription, *ICUR* 2 p 110); the critical apparatus in *CCSL* gives references to Aldhelm and Alcuin). Tivoli: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.10.19–23. On Arator and Vigilius, Sotinel (1989).
- 74 Eagerness: Procopius, *Secret History*, 13.7. Zoilus: Liberatus, *brev*, 23. Gallic scholar: Gennadius, *PL* 58: 1113. I forebear references to texts easily accessible in English translation in *Council of Constantinople*, where an excellent introduction and commentary can also be found.
- 75 Letter to Miaphysites: Liberatus, *brev*, 22; Victor of Tunnuna, *chron.*, 542.1 (*MGH AA* 11: 200f). Letter to Justinian: *Coll avel* 92. Deal with Theodora: *LP*, 61.3; with Vigilius's *Etsi indignus, vicarius sum beati Petri apostoli*, compare the language Leo applied to himself (*indignus haeres* of Peter, *tract*. 3.4), and the description of John I as *vicarius beati Petri apostoli* (*LP*, 55.3).
- 76 *LP*, 61.4. The words attributed to the crowd sound like real speech: *Famis tua tecum! Mortalitas tua tecum! Male fecisti Romanis, male invenias ubi vadis!* Sequence of prayers: Chavasse (1950): 164–69. Patriarch: *V Eutychiei*, 37f.
- 77 Arrangements: *LP*, 61.5; Procopius, *Wars*, 7.15.13–16. Datius and Zoilus: Facundus, 4.3.4, 8

- (CCSL 90A: 122, 124). Imperial summons: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.16.1. Date of arrival: *auct marc*, 547.4 (MGH AA 11: 108).
- 78 *LP*, 61.5 provides an imaginative account of his arrival.
- 79 The narratives of these events by Caspar (1933): 248ff and Stein (1949): 641ff remain unsurpassed.
- 80 Kind of medicine: *PL* 69:60. African bishops: Victor of Tunnunna, *chron*, 550.1 (MGH AA 11: 202). Bishop of Tomi: *PL* 69: 51–3. Bishop of Arles: *MGH Ep* 3: 67f.
- 81 *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1: 158.
- 82 *Cod. iust*, 1.12 collects legislation concerning those who flee to churches; see too *nov*. 37.10.
- 83 *Itin eger*, 23.7 (CCSL 175: 67).
- 84 Eustratios, *V Eut*, 28–31; Victor of Tunnunna, *chron*, 553 (MGH AA 11: 203).
- 85 Pragmatic Sanction: *Pro petitione Vigiliis venerabilis antiquioris Romae* App. vii.1 to *Novellae*, *CIC* 3:799; note however a reference to *beatissimus papa* at vii.19. The *Variae* of Cassiodorus show Theoderic responding to *petitiones* from the green faction in the circus (1.20.2, 1.27.2) and the Jews of Genoa (2.27.1) as well as people with the rank of *spectabilis* (e.g. 1.39.1, 2.11.2). Dismissed: Theophanes, *chron*, 6045. Burial: *LP*, 61.9.
- 86 Procopius, *Wars*, 7.35.9.
- 87 Anastasius: *coll avel*, 113f. Felix: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 282. John: *PL* 66: 20–24. Council of 529: CCSL 148A: 64f. Poison: Ennodius (of Gallic origin), ep. 2.19.16.
- 88 Avitus: ep. 34, 39 (MGH AA 6/2: 64f, 68). Caesarius: *Vita Caesarii* 1.38, 42 (MGH SRM 3: 471, 473).
- 89 On the Niedergang of the senate at the time of the Gothic war, Schäfer (1991): 276–85, with Brown (1984: 21–37) on the ‘crisis of the old ruling class’. *LPR* 95 sees the Roman senate as failing at a slightly later time, when the Lombards came. Claim: Ennodius, *opusc.* 6.17 (MGH AA 7: 314.22). Education: Cassiodorus, *inst, praef.* Boethius: *cons phil*, 2.m7.15. Gregory: *hom ez* 2.6.22 (*SChr* 327: 316). Ravenna: Gregory, ep. 5.11. Naples: Markus (1997): 108–10.

Few popes have entered office in such difficult circumstances as **Pelagius I (16 April 555–3 March 561)**. A well-educated man of broad experience and the son of a senior civil servant, he had been among a delegation that represented the Roman church at a synod held in Constantinople in May 535, and become the pope's apocrisiarius in the city. He had played a part in the appointment of a patriarch of Alexandria who supported the council of Chalcedon, and was among those present when Menas ordained him in Constantinople. It was probably around this period that he translated stories of eastern holy men and their sayings from Greek into Latin, producing an influential work that soon came to the notice of Benedict of Monte Cassino. But Pelagius made himself useful in other respects. He played a part, difficult to disentangle from a web of biased sources, in the events surrounding the accession of pope Vigilius, and when a deacon was alleged to have died while being tortured on the orders of the patriarch of Alexandria, a city notorious for the violence of its ecclesiastical politics, he represented that pope in a fact-finding mission despatched by Justinian. Returning to Rome during the Gothic war he made disbursements to the destitute populace of the city, and when Totila captured it he interceded with the conqueror on behalf of its inhabitants. Totila later sent him back to Constantinople as an envoy to Justinian, where, contrary to the king's wishes, Pelagius decided to stay. Inevitably he became involved in the imbroglio surrounding Vigilius. He had signed Vigilius's *Ordinance* in 553, and in the first months of 554, as the humiliation of the pope was nearing its climax, Pelagius wrote a work defending the Three Chapters, in which Vigilius was cast as an apostate who anathematised the teachings of Leo in secret. But this work only survives in one manuscript, a circumstance that suggests that its author may have wished to put it behind him, and whatever convictions Pelagius began with melted when Justinian dangled the possibility of papal office before him. The emperor was keen for the bishops of major churches to be sound men, and ambitious men knew how to make themselves agreeable. In 552 Eutychios had become patriarch of Constantinople after impressing Justinian with evidence from the Bible that it was proper to anathematise

people who were dead, just as he was seeking to do in condemning the Three Chapters, and abandoning loyalty to the Three Chapters would have been a small price to pay to become bishop of Rome.¹

The city to which he returned had recently passed through one of the lowest points in its long history. It was said to have lain desolate for 40 days or more after Totila entered it at the end of 546, when neither a human nor an animal was to be found there. At about that time bishop Sabinus of Canossa, a figure who once welcomed Totila as a guest at his dinner table, shared with the holy man Benedict his fear that the king would cause the city to be destroyed so that it would be uninhabited. But the monk demurred: Rome would not be wiped out by foreign peoples, but would waste away, worn down by storms, bolts of lightning, whirlwinds, and earthquakes. As it turned out, neither was correct, but apocalyptic fears were clearly in the air.² Yet Pelagius faced a greater problem than a demoralised city, for many in the West were enraged at his self-interested volte-face concerning the Three Chapters. Facundus, the author of a work in support of the Chapters that Pelagius himself had made use of before he turned against them, came to think of him, no less than Vigilius, as an apostate. The account of Vigilius provided in the *Liber Pontificalis* reflects tensions within Rome by its extraordinary silence as to the controversy that detained the pope for so long in Constantinople. No reader could deduce from it what the issues between the pope and the emperor were, and its author must have believed that some things were better left unspoken. Moreover, its version of Vigilius's last years seems crafted to suggest that the succession of Pelagius was inevitable, for it describes the Roman people asking Justinian to let them have the archdeacon Pelagius as pope after the death of Vigilius. The attribution of this rank to Pelagius may have been false, for it had been the archdeacon Theophanius who subscribed to Vigilius's first *Constitutum* in May 553, his name being followed by that of Pelagius. Perhaps the author was responding to a situation in which Pelagius's accession was contested.³ However, the stages of the controversy between Vigilius and Justinian were made very clear in a work that someone with access to the archive of the Roman church produced at about the same time, a collection of 244 documents, many of them otherwise unknown, that is now referred to as the *Collectio Avellana*, after the name of the place where an important manuscript was discovered. The texts range in date from the late fourth century to 553, and document the dealings of Vigilius and his predecessors with Justin and Justinian in great detail. Significantly, the *Collection* opens with a document, its status unclear, that tells of the machinations of Damasus. After his rival Ursinus had been ordained in the Lateran, we are told that Damasus invited gladiators, chariot racers, labourers, and all the clergy to take possession of the basilica with axes, swords, and cudgels, and that a massacre

ensued. We are clearly not meant to like this pope, yet he emerges as a serious and authoritative person in the forged exchange of letters between Jerome and himself that open the standard text of the *Liber Pontificalis*. The *Collectio* and the *Liber Pontificalis* seem to begin from very different places.⁴

Perhaps the issues that had been canvassed with such vigour in Rome half a century earlier had never gone away. When it included correspondence bearing on the dispute between Boniface and Eulalius for control of the Roman church during 418–419, the *Collectio* revisited issues that had been debated between the supporters of pope Symmachus and his enemies. The single manuscript of the Laurentian Fragment of the *Liber Pontificalis* that has come down to us contains a list of popes that was kept up to date until the death of Vigilius, one that differs in a single respect from the mainstream version of that text. The latter credits Silverius with having been pope for one year, five months, and 11 days, whereas according to the Fragment he was pope for just nine months. The difference can easily be accounted for if we take the Fragment's figure to be for the period until he was deposed, and the official text to have seen Silverius as continuing to be pope until he died. This explains its failure to indicate the length of the period for which the see was vacant between Silverius and Vigilius, and the otherwise puzzling description of Vigilius in the official version of the text as having been archdeacon after he had been ordained pope. The author of this version of the text was no friend of Justinian, or the first pope that he imposed on Rome, whereas the annotator of the Fragment persevered in a view more favourable to the Empire. He was not alone in displaying a degree of sympathy towards Vigilius, for at a very early date a version of the acts of the council of 553 was produced in Latin that omitted or summarised material that showed him in a bad light.⁵

In the midst of these currents, Pelagius had a stroke of good fortune. A priest, Mareas, who had been administering the church in the absence of Vigilius and had emerged as his heir apparent, died shortly after Vigilius did, so leaving the way open for him to be ordained. Ordination was an important experience for popes, who celebrated its anniversary as their birthday. The first five among the collection of the homilies of Leo I were preached on the anniversary of his ordination, whereas Gregory I's anniversary was one of four days in the year on which he distributed special largesse. But only two bishops, those of Perugia and Ferentino, assisted by a priest from Ostia, participated in the ordination of Pelagius. This was a desperately poor showing, for the council of Nicaea had stipulated that three bishops were to participate in ordinations, and it fell far short of the standard procedure in Rome, where the ritual for ordaining a pope required the bishop of Albano to say one prayer, the bishop of Porto another, and the bishop of Ostia to conduct the laying on of hands, as deacons held a gospel book above his head.⁶ Moreover, whereas

Ferentino was nearby, Perugia was some 150 km distant from Rome. Why had these extraordinary arrangements been made? Doubtless the ranks of bishops in nearby churches had been depleted in the lengthy absence of Vigilius, when new ones could not be ordained.⁷ But they may also have reflected the low standing of Pelagius. In 556 he wrote to bishops who were refusing to mention his name at mass and to the Frankish king Childebert, defending himself against reports circulating in Gaul that his faith was unsound. In another letter that he addressed to the whole people of God, Pelagius professed his acceptance of four councils, and his veneration of bishops Theodoret and Ibas, two of the theologians condemned by the fifth council that he pointedly failed to mention in addition to the four. He also asserted that he accepted the letters written by the popes whom he named, one by one, from Celestine to Agapetus, above all blessed Leo; Silverius and Vigilius were conspicuous by their absence from the catalogue.⁸ Even within Rome Pelagius's position was weak, for it was said that there were no clergy whom he could promote, as the monasteries and people described as the great throng of the religious, the wise, and the noble withdrew from his communion, claiming that he had been involved in the death of Vigilius. Pelagius responded to the charge with dramatic flair. Having obtained the assent of Narses, the Byzantine general who then controlled Italy following the defeat of the Goths, a litany was held at the church of S Pancras. The location was well chosen, for a tendency for those who swore false oaths at the tomb of Pancras to come to bad ends had turned it into a desirable place for people who wanted oaths they swore to be taken seriously. Pelagius then solemnly processed across the city to S Peter's, where, holding the gospels and a cross above his head, he climbed into the pulpit and satisfied the whole people that he had done nothing wrong against Vigilius, adding for good measure that simony would not be practised.⁹

Elsewhere in Italy, the church of Ravenna was showing dangerous tendencies. The principle that a city's political importance determined the importance of its church which the church of Constantinople had used to promote its interests was similarly available to the church of Ravenna, the capital city of Byzantine Italy from 540. The churches and associated buildings that had been erected there since the middle of the fifth century rivalled those built in Rome in the same period, and whereas work on the great church of San Vitale had begun while the Ostrogoths were still in power, its design had much more in common with churches recently built in Constantinople than those of Rome. When the last bishop of Ravenna to assume office under the Goths died, the people of the city asked Justinian to bestow the pallium on the man they wished to succeed him. But the emperor had other ideas, and in 546 he ordered Vigilius, then in Greece on his way to Constantinople, to ordain a deacon from Pula, a town on the opposite shore of the Adriatic Sea. The absence from Italy

of Vigilius and bishop Datius of Milan meant that the new bishop of Ravenna, Maximianus, would be a senior figure, and by 553 he was being addressed as archbishop. His dignity, as well as his closeness to the emperor, is indicated by a well-known mosaic in the church of San Vitale that shows a party of clergy, the most senior among them Maximianus, the only figure in the scene whose name is spelled out, leading Justinian, officials, and soldiers as they process into church. The emperor and the bishop dominate the scene, and whereas Justinian is shown as the central and tallest figure, his importance emphasised by a nimbus, Maximianus, wearing a pallium, is ambiguously placed so that he stands both in front of and behind the emperor. The pair seem to have enjoyed good relations, for when a dispute later broke out over the ownership of a forest, Maximianus travelled to Constantinople to seek Justinian's help, and the two of them, by then grey haired, reminisced together about old times. Not surprisingly, Justinian declared that the forest belonged to the church. Another trip Maximianus made to the royal city was less successful, for Justinian refused to give him the body of S Andrew, and he had to resort to cutting off a piece of the apostle's beard to take home. Given that Andrew was the brother of Peter, it is possible that Maximianus was seeking to make a statement of the relationship of the church of Ravenna to that of Rome of a kind that may have made the latter uneasy. Maximianus was almost certainly in Constantinople during Vigilius's lengthy spell in the city, but there is no evidence that they spoke to each other.¹⁰

Another problem was developing in northern Italy, for resistance to the condemnation of the Three Chapters to which Vigilius had finally acquiesced was gathering force. We may be inclined now to see the issues behind it as being trivial, but many people took them with the utmost seriousness. Among them was Vigilius's nephew Rusticus, whom he ordained a deacon. At some stage he joined his uncle in Constantinople, but they fell out, and in 550 Rusticus found himself excommunicated. Later he was exiled to the Thebaid in Egypt, but in about 565 turned up in Constantinople again, where he took up residence in the monastery of the Sleepless Monks who had been excommunicated by John II. He translated into Latin an account of the council of Ephesus I that had been prepared by Irenaeus, a supporter of the condemned Nestorius, which included many documents, and joined to it a translation of the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon; his work survives, together with a disputation in which a heretic defines the word 'person' in terms that recall the way in which Boethius had defined it.¹¹ Inevitably, the works of Leo were carefully studied. Someone in northern Italy, probably during the second quarter of the sixth century, compiled a cento of passages dealing with Christology that included extracts from his sermons. Just as Leo's works had been forged and altered during his own lifetime by Miaphysite propagandists,

so in the second half of the sixth century a letter in his name to bishop Theodore was confected by supporters of the Three Chapters, that nevertheless contains a bedrock of material genuinely by Leo. We know of three manuscripts containing a Latin version of the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon that were copied over other texts during the seventh century in Italy, in two cases northern Italy.¹² As so often with ecclesiastical controversies, it is hard to determine the extent to which strongly held convictions on apparently abstruse topics masked other issues or were vehicles for personal ambition. But the position defended by the supporters of the Chapters was contrary to the one to which Vigilius had committed the church of Rome.

The series of popes whose families were distinguished in the secular world continued with **John III (17 July 561–13 July 574)**, whose father had held the rank of illustrious, and may have been a provincial governor, the very rank the great Ambrose had held before becoming bishop of Milan nearly 200 years earlier, towards the end of the reign of Theoderic. A man from such a background would have enjoyed a good education, and there is reason to believe that John was indeed learned, for we know of a Roman sub-deacon of the period named John who, as Pelagius had done, translated eastern ascetic material into Latin, and a deacon of the same name who produced an exposition of the first seven books of the Old Testament and a commentary on the letters of S Paul; perhaps the future pope had produced these works at earlier stages of his career.¹³ One would like to know more of John, but frustratingly he is the first of a sequence of badly documented popes. Vagaries of evidence rather than lack of achievement were responsible for this. The flurry that accompanied the appearance of the *Liber Pontificalis* produced accounts of a number of popes that are full of circumstantial detail; but John's predecessor Pelagius I is the first of 10 popes for whom that source provides a scanty account. A collection of letters written by Pelagius I allows him to be better known, but some of the popes who succeeded him are little more than names. Indeed, it is possible that the *Liber Pontificalis* ceased to be systematically maintained. Its account of John III has a very odd feeling: It discusses military events irrelevant to the Roman church, and its assertion at the end of its account of these that all Italy rejoiced at the successes of Narses segues very awkwardly into a demand made by the Romans to be freed from the servitude to which Narses was subjecting them. Perhaps the account was written at a time when the period of John was not well remembered. On the other hand, the *Liber Pontificalis* observes that pope Boniface IV (619–625) was gentle above all men and merciful, and thereafter brief descriptions of the personal characteristics of popes frequently occur, so work on the text may have been resumed then.¹⁴ Nevertheless, despite its brevity and the apparently

legendary nature of some of the material it incorporates, the account of John in the *Liber Pontificalis* touches on very important matters.

Despite his successes against the Goths and other enemies of the Empire, Narses was not popular, and the *Liber Pontificalis* describes the Romans writing to the emperor and empress, complaining that they would rather serve the Goths than the Greeks. When Narses heard of this, he said cryptically, ‘if I have done evil to the Romans, let me find evil.’ Having left Rome for Campania, he is said to have written to the Lombard people, intending them to come and occupy Italy. When pope John learned of the complaint that had been made concerning Narses, he went to Naples and asked him to return. But the general replied: ‘Tell me, most holy pope, what evil did I do to the Romans?’ The exarch planned to go the emperor, but with difficulty John prevailed upon him to return to Rome. This account is certainly suspect, and some of its details suggest that the author wrote in a later period and had a fuzzy understanding of John’s time, for serving the Goths was not an option after Narses had decisively defeated them in 553. Moreover, the denial of Narses that he had done evil to the Romans is suspiciously similar to other passages in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in which Antonina is said to have asked Silverius, whom she addressed as lord pope Silverius, what had been done to him and the Romans to motivate them to betray her cause to the Goths, while the people accused Vigilius of having done evil to the Romans. But however untrustworthy it may be, the narrative seeks to explain one of the most decisive events in Italian history, the coming of the Germanic people known as the Lombards, to which we shall shortly turn.¹⁵

Having come back to Rome together, we are told that Narses and John parted company, the former settling into the old imperial palace while the pope moved outside the city, establishing himself in the cemetery of Tiburtius and Valerian on the Via Appia, where he transacted the business of the church, even ordaining bishops. His relocation is mysterious, but not unparalleled. During the early fifth century the hard-pressed pope Boniface I had moved to the cemetery of S Felicity on the Via Salaria, whereas a text forged during the Laurentian schism described pope Liberius, forced out of Rome by a heretical emperor, baptising at a cemetery where Peter had baptised. Additionally, we have seen Hilary apparently take up residence outside the city walls near S Laurence’s. Perhaps political difficulties had made Rome too small to hold both the general and the pope, and the latter responded according to precedent. Another context in which the move can be placed does not explain it, but provides suggestive background. Among his other activities, John III restored the cemeteries of the martyrs and arranged for services to be conducted there on Sundays by clergy from the Lateran, Pelagius II would soon erect a basilica in the cemetery of the martyr Hermes, and Boniface V was to undertake work

on a cemetery. During the seventh century guidebooks were produced that directed people to the various cemeteries where martyrs lay buried. The shrines of the martyrs, being outside the walls of the city and not sites of regular liturgical observance, were not well maintained and steadily tended to fall into ruins; active popes in the eighth century would restore both the cemetery of Tiburtius and Valerian and the basilica of Hermes. But they were focal points of piety, so John's move to such a site accorded with the mood of the time.¹⁶

On taking Africa the Byzantines had installed a powerful system of defences, but there is little sign of such activity in Italy, and their forces were unable to offer strong resistance when Lombards invaded in 568. The newcomers fanned out across the north of Italy, taking Milan in 569 and Pavia in 572. King Authari (584–590) established a kingdom based in the Po valley, while dukes established themselves to the south at Spoleto and Benevento. Amid the confusion Benedict's monastery of Monte Cassino was destroyed, and the monks made their way to Rome, quite possibly taking with them Benedict's autograph copy of his *Rule*. The invaders were generally hated. A few decades after their arrival, pope Gregory regarded them as utterly unspeakable. Unfortunately, the author of our main narrative source for their early history, Paul the deacon, found the subject of their religion embarrassing and avoided discussing it; but most were not Catholics when they arrived in Italy. Some were polytheists, whereas some of the kings at least were anti-Nicean Christians. Gregory mentions Authari forbidding Lombards to be baptised as Catholics at Easter in 590, although there is no sign that this was a general policy, and he instructed bishops to encourage Lombards to have their children who had been baptised into heresy reconciled with the church. He also tells of a Lombard who found a key made of gold that had been in contact with a relic of S Peter. He took to it with a knife, but having been possessed by a spirit he used the weapon to cut his throat, and died. When Authari and his men arrived at the scene they were overcome with dread. A Catholic Lombard, Miniuf, picked the key up from the ground, and Authari sent it, together with another gold key he had made, to the pope with an explanation of the miracle. Whereas a duke of Spoleto, Ariulf, was a polytheist, he attributed his success in a battle he fought against the Romans towards the end of the sixth century to the intervention of a Catholic martyr, Sabinus, whom he recognised from a portrait. Such stories foreshadow the general adoption of Catholicism by the Lombards. But the dislocation their arrival caused was massive, and dealing with them would be a concern, intermittent but sometimes urgent, for popes until the late eighth century.¹⁷

Their entry into Italy coincided with the time when the defenders of the Three Chapters had every reason to fear the attentions of the Empire and the

pope. Whereas it does not follow that some of them may have found the rule of Lombards preferable to that of an emperor or pope they thought of as heretical,¹⁸ areas occupied by the invaders were ideally suited to become zones of resistance to their policies. Of the three chief bishops of northern Italy, only that of Ravenna had nothing to fear from Lombards. Bishop Honoratus of Milan took up residence in the coastal town of Genoa, and in 573 his successor, Laurentius, provided pope John with a legally binding document, witnessed by an appropriate number of noble men, among them the prefect of the city, the future pope Gregory I, in which he represented himself as responding to the care of the apostolic see for unity among the bishops. The language is abstract, but the purport clear; in his parlous situation, Laurentius may have felt he had no alternative to being in communion with the pope, and whereas discontent at his capitulation would linger among his suffragan bishops Milan would thereafter be in Rome's camp. The future of the church of Aquileia was different. In 568 bishop Paulinus moved to the more defensible site of Grado, where he assumed the ambitious title of Patriarch. A collection of canon law made centuries later included a response made by Benedict, described as the servant of the servants of God and perhaps to be identified with Pelagius's successor pope Benedict, to a query of an unnamed Patriarch of Grado, as to whether a man could marry the sister of his dead fiancée; he was told that she could. Before long another bishop of Aquileia, Elias, began to refurbish a church that was significantly dedicated to S Euphemia, in which he and his successors would be buried. The cult of Euphemia was then in full swing, for a mosaic installed in the church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna in the time of bishop Agnellus (557–570) showed her leading a procession of female martyrs. More significantly, Elias summoned a synod of all the bishops of Istria and Venetia that affirmed its adherence to the council of Chalcedon and withdrew from communion with the church of Rome, so making formal what would be a long schism.¹⁹

An inscription John III placed in a church described him as being pope at a time of reduced circumstances when the world was in a state of collapse, but conditions worsened when **Benedict I (2 June 575–30 July 579)** was pope. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes Lombards as spreading over all Italy when he was pope, a detail that may reflect their beginning to trouble Rome. It states that the emperor, having heard that Rome was exposed to hunger and death, sent to Egypt and despatched ships laden with grain to the city. This act of kindness may have been connected with a mission the patrician Pamphronius undertook to Constantinople in 577 or the following year, in which he sought aid against the invaders. In 579 another embassy arrived there, representing the pope as well as the senate. It is tempting to see a beautiful cross, now to be seen in the Vatican Museum, that the emperor Justin and his wife Sophia sent

to the pope as having been connected with these events. In 571/572 Justin had showed his loyalty to the traditions of Rome when he began to build churches dedicated to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Nevertheless, the intense involvement between Rome and Constantinople in the time of Justin I and Justinian had ended.²⁰

The *Liber Pontificalis* names the emperor who sent the grain ships to Rome as Justinian. Its mistake, perhaps another indication that this portion of the text was written somewhat later than the events it describes, which some copyists of the text noticed and corrected, was a fairly serious one, for Justinian had died 10 years before Benedict became pope. On the other hand, the Byzantine historian Evagrius, writing at the end of the century, believed that pope Vigilius had been succeeded by John, passing over Pelagius, and when the Byzantine historian Theophanes wrote his chronicle at the beginning of the ninth century, Benedict was the last pope whose name he attached to a year until some way into the eighth century. And whereas the patchy nature of the *Liber Pontificalis* renders arguments based on its silences hazardous, it may be significant that after the spate of donations it records Justin and Justinian as having made to the Roman church, the next imperial donors it names are Phocas and Constans, the second of whom made his gift in the exceptional circumstance of being in Rome. Justinian, a native speaker of Latin who took the West very seriously and tended to micromanage, had created an atypical situation. What other emperor would have named three men whom he expected to be ordained in the church of Centumcellae? Inevitably, East and West had less to do with each other after he died. The changed situation is implied by a curious statement made by the historian Paul the deacon. Looking back from the late eighth century, Paul added a note to a source he had been following: As he saw it, Maurice, who became emperor in 590, was the first emperor from the race of the Greeks. And the steady move apart implied by such evidence was not helped by the council of 553, which achieved the opposite of what it had been intended to. It had little impact in the East, and most unusually its proceedings survive as a whole in a Latin version rather than the Greek in which they were conducted. Not only did it fail to achieve unity between the adherents and opponents of the council of Chalcedon, but it drove elements of the Western church out of communion with the pope. While emperors continued to seek common ground with the Miaphysites, Justin II issuing a confession of faith that the West would have deemed unacceptably imprecise as to Christ's two natures, popes who had to deal with schismatics were forced to adopt ambiguous attitudes to the council of 553. So it was that their attempts to conciliate their own constituencies caused emperors and popes to look away from each other. And increasingly emperors had other things to worry about. Slavs and Avars assailed the Balkans from the middle of

the sixth century, Persians briefly occupied the greater part of the Empire early in the seventh century, and Arabs were a preoccupation from the 630s. In such circumstances the West was easily forgotten, for although it occasionally generated claimants to the imperial throne, invasions were never launched from its soil, and in its impoverished condition Italy had little to contribute to the taxation that continued to finance the Byzantine army.²¹

The grip Lombards were coming to exercise was shown clearly when Benedict died, for after the see had been vacant for three months and 10 days his successor **Pelagius II (26 November 579–7 February 590)** was ordained without having been able to receive the assent of the emperor, for Lombards were besieging Rome at the time. Pelagius turned his home into a residence for elderly poor people. Presumably a large establishment, his act suggests that Pelagius was another pope to come from a well-established family, and in slightly different ways Pelagius's example of turning his family home to good purpose would be followed by other popes. His father bore a Germanic name Unigild, but as in the case of Boniface II this was not significant. There is no sign that any Germanic background helped him respond to the crisis posed by Lombard assailants.²²

By then, the invaders were making life difficult in Rome, and Pelagius responded to the problem they posed in a novel way. There is extant a strange letter that a bishop from northern Gaul, Aunarius of Auxerre, wrote to Pelagius. The bishop asserted that hostile activity had prevented his coming to Rome, plausibly enough given the Lombard blockade, but the language he used suggests that he would not have come as a pilgrim, but to consult with the pope. When he replied in 580, Pelagius was not sure whether to believe him, and feared he did not take the difficulties of the Roman church seriously enough. But, the pope pointed out, thanks to divine providence the orthodox belief of the king under whom Aunarius lived was similar to that of the Roman Empire, and he asked his correspondent to use his best efforts to persuade the Frankish kings to come to Italy and deal with the Lombards. Aunarius, who presided over the only diocesan synod held in Gaul between the early sixth and late seventh centuries for which proceedings survive, was doubtless an energetic man, but the town over which he presided as bishop, located as it is on a tributary of the Seine, was far from Italy. In 584 Pelagius sent an embassy to the emperor seeking his assistance in dealing with the calamities and tribulations Lombards were causing, which had reached such a point that the exarch Decius was scarcely able to defend the territory around Ravenna. In the same year king Childebert II led the first of a series of Frankish expeditions into Italy against the Lombards, several years after the emperor Maurice had sent him a large sum to encourage him to attack. The scattered pieces of evidence suggest that Pelagius and Maurice may have been co-operating to

gain Frankish intervention against the Lombards, but such endeavours would be fruitless; when he wrote to Aunarius some years later, all Pelagius could do was ask for his prayers.²³

Pelagius also sent three letters to bishop Elias of Aquileia, based at Grado, and the bishops of Istria who were under him. Their adherence to the Three Chapters had caused these bishops to go into schism, and the ways in which Pelagius handled them are significant in various ways. The first argues for their return to the bosom of the mother church by quoting Christ's words to Peter: 'I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have been converted, strengthen your brothers' (Luke 22: 32), which Pelagius took to mean that the faith of Peter could never be shaken or changed. Moreover, wishing his other followers to be strengthened by Peter, Christ had entrusted the care of the grazing flock to him. He had also given the keys of His kingdom to Peter, and built His church upon him. This was an effective statement of the traditional attitude of the Roman church to the authority of Peter; one which, nevertheless, did not make explicit how Peter and the contemporary bishop of Rome were connected. Turning to the councils of the church, Pelagius accepted that these numbered four, among them those of Ephesos, which he described as having been presided over by Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria, and Chalcedon, at which Leo presided through his legates and vicars. This was an idiosyncratic position, for not only did it tactfully ignore the problematic council of 553, but its interpretation of the roles of Celestine and Leo at Ephesos and Chalcedon would not survive a reading of the proceedings of those councils. Pelagius implored his correspondents to remain in the unity of the church, quoting copiously from the Bible. If they were scandalised about some things they should send people to discuss it, for someone who did not remain in the peace and unity of the church could not possess God.²⁴

Elias having failed to reply satisfactorily, Pelagius wrote again, stating that the archives of the church had been investigated, and that their contents failed to support the position his correspondent had adopted. Having quoted from letters of Leo, he went on to develop a case on moral grounds: Elias and those who shared his views should not remain in the vice of obstinacy because of their love of bragging, for this was akin to pride, and Theodore of Mopsuestia and the letter of Ibas would do them no good on the day of judgment. Expanding the argument for unity he had made in his earlier letter, Pelagius quoted a passage from Augustine that cannot be identified, and at length from a work of Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*. One of the passages quoted, with slight alteration, is that from [chapter four](#) which is extant in two forms, one of them presenting Cyprian's original views and the second a different version. The text available to Pelagius was the former, the so-called Primacy Text, which in particular asserts that 'a primacy was given to Peter, so

that one church of Christ and chair might be shown.’ If Elias had any doubts he should send people to Rome for discussions; if that were too far to travel, Pelagius proposed that a synod be held at Ravenna, which representatives from Rome would also attend.²⁵

This was followed by a far longer letter, which, while written in the name of Pelagius, was almost certainly the work of the deacon Gregory, who would soon succeed him as pope. It was a tour de force that confronted head-on issues the earlier letters had avoided. Gregory asserted that what had happened in the time of Justinian did not overthrow what had been done at Chalcedon, and whereas this was a coy way of referring to the council held in Constantinople in 553 that had proved such a stumbling block, he did at least acknowledge it. Turning to the use to which Elias had put the letters of Leo, fundamental for Western thinking of the person of Christ, Gregory found it wanting, and he in turn quoted from Leo at exhaustive length. The awkward point that Vigilius and all the western leaders had initially opposed condemnation of the Three Chapters could scarcely be denied, but Gregory sought to deflect it by mentioning the problems Latin speakers had with Greek, doubtless not the strongest defence, but one that may have reflected his own recent experience in Constantinople. Responding to the objection that it was unfair to anathematise people who were dead, Gregory quoted an apposite discussion in one of Augustine’s letters, and then systematically worked his way through the issues raised by Theodore of Mopsuestia, quoting many passages, before doing the same with the epistle attributed to Ibas, and finally the writings of Theodoret against Cyril of Alexandria. One has the initial impression of an amazing thoroughness of research and powerful marshalling of evidence that seems to distinguish much of the letter from the works definitely known to be by Gregory, but alas, much of it was not original, for a good deal of it, even including the quotation from Augustine, was copied from a Latin version of the proceedings of the council of 553. The apostolic see was known for its having embraced Augustine’s writings, and there are few surprises greater than a papal document that reproduces a passage by that author by copying it from the proceedings of a council held in Constantinople. A text of these proceedings will have been sent to Rome and carefully stored, waiting to be exploited. Whereas the letter is in Pelagius’s name, no-one who has read Gregory’s works for long can fail to recognise his hand in stretches of it, particularly in the last sentence, with its characteristic beginning (‘But we...’) and subsequent turning of the argument.²⁶

Pelagius was active in another area, for he constructed from its foundations a basilica over the body of the martyr Laurence, apparently next to the basilica that Constantine had erected there. A mosaic on the front wall shows Christ seated on an orb, flanked by Peter and Paul, Peter to Christ’s left and Paul to

the right, as seen by the viewer (in the earlier mosaic in the church of SS Cosmas and Damian their positions are reversed). Behind Peter stands Laurence, holding a book containing part of the Bible and, in a gesture of patronage, extending his right arm around the shoulders of Pelagius, a smaller figure who advances, offering a model of the church. Behind Paul stands Stephen, the first martyr, beside whom is Hippolytus, a martyr of the third century. The inclusion of the last of these in the scene may seem surprising, for he had been an antipope, but this need not have been known to the person who commissioned the mosaic, and his presence may reflect a legend that he had been converted by Laurence, the saint to whom the church was dedicated. In some ways this mosaic differs from that at the church of Cosmas and Damian, where only Christ is shown with a halo, for at S Laurence's all the saints have one, that of Christ being distinguished from the others by its containing three bars of a cross. And whereas pope Felix IV had been shown standing to one side, apparently disengaged from the action, Pelagius is depicted enjoying the patronage of Laurence. His relations with the saint were happier than those of the people who chanced to look upon his body while working on the church, all of whom were believed, a few years later, to have died within 10 days. Whereas Pelagius was the only person in the scene to be depicted without a halo, the mosaic both identifies him, naming him 'Pelagius the bishop', and makes a strong statement of the circle to which he belonged. The church he built was more modest than many earlier ones, being some 30 m in length, but its ideological statement was strong.²⁷

The vast amount of documentation we have for **Gregory I (3 September 590–12 March 604)** ensures that his figure looms larger than it should in the history of the Roman church. Some 860 letters have come down to us in his name, almost as many as the surviving letters of every preceding pope combined, and far more than the 145 letters we have written in the names of the popes who followed him during the remainder of the seventh century. Despite their volume, the letters represent a selection from a larger body of material, and we cannot tell what proportion of the whole the surviving ones represent. Whereas most of them will not have been dictated by Gregory himself, for routine correspondence was dealt with by officials, they provide an unparalleled view of the affairs of the Roman church. Gregory also produced far more literary work than any other pope of the period: commentaries on a number of books of the Old Testament, Job, Ezekiel, and the Song of Songs that paid particular attention to their allegorical and moral meanings; a psychologically perceptive book, *Pastoral Care*, containing advice to those in positions of authority; and another book, *Dialogues*, telling stories of holy men who had worked miracles in Italy. He also published a collection of his sermons on the Gospels delivered to congregations in various churches in

Rome, and 82 liturgical prayers that have been attributed to him had an impact in the public worship of the church. And although the account of him provided in the *Liber Pontificalis* is sketchy, Gregory was the subject of some early biographies, one written in England in the early eighth century, another by an Italian later in that century, and a third, particularly interesting, towards the end of the ninth century by a deacon in Rome. Whereas our treatment of Gregory will therefore be more detailed than that of other popes, it will nevertheless draw on a lower proportion of the evidence that is available, and so not say all that might be said. We will also take advantage of the volume of evidence bearing on him to use Gregory as a starting point for discussions of some general matters.²⁸

It is still possible to visit the house in which Gregory grew up, a rambling complex, more than 200 years old by his time, in an up-market area on the Caelian Hill. In Rome, as in other cities with hot summers, the hills have always been desirable places of residence. An obscure emperor of the third century, Tetricus the younger, was said to have grown up in a house on the Caelian Hill, and in the second half of the fourth century the great senator Symmachus had lived there. One of the people with whom Gregory corresponded was a woman who may have been one of his remote descendants, Rusticiana; perhaps they had known each other while they were growing up. It could be assumed that the Caelian was a part of the city likely to produce a pope, for the person who wrote a fictitious narrative concerning S Pancras during the sixth century represented Gaius, a pope of the late third century, as having a home there, and as we have seen it is possible that John II came from the same hill; there are implications here for the social origins of popes which we shall consider later.²⁹ Gregory's family had already produced at least one pope, for he referred to a pope Felix, probably to be seen as Felix III, as his ancestor. Felix is known to have had a son named Gordianus and another relative named Aemeliana, whereas Gregory's father, another Gordianus, had a sister named Aemiliana. The family was certainly conservative in its choice of names, and as another Gordianus was the father of pope Agapetus it is possible that this pope belonged to it as well.³⁰ Gregory began a career in the administration of the newly established Byzantine Italy, and came to hold the senior post of Prefect of the City of Rome. Yet he flung it away. It was probably soon after the death of his father that he took a step he had been contemplating for a long time, and left the world to become a monk. He established seven monasteries on the family estates, six in Sicily and one in Rome, and entered the last.³¹ Such an adoption of a monastic life was a gesture by a man of a certain class, and Gregory remained sensitive to class distinctions. One suspects that few monks enjoyed special meals sent by their mother on silver dishes as Gregory did. His works of charity included sending

special meals to leading people who had fallen on hard times, and his shock at one of his aunts, Gordiana, abandoning the religious life to marry a person employed to manage her estates may have been on social as much as religious grounds.³² A man of introspective and self-critical nature with an extraordinary ability to bring different parts of the Bible to his mind, he clearly flourished as a monk. But his administrative competence came back to haunt him, for, having been made a deacon by pope Benedict I, he was sent to Constantinople in about 579 or 580 by Pelagius II as his apocrisarius, or ambassador. The job involved interacting with the very top of the Byzantine world. Gregory lifted the eldest son of the emperor Maurice from the font, and when he became pope his correspondents included one of the emperor's sisters, Theoctista, and his doctor, Theodore. It would be a useful web of contacts.³³

Rome and its Church

The city whose bishop Gregory became in 590 had changed beyond recognition during the sixth century, and whereas a bishop in Gaul still thought of Rome as the city of cities and mighty head of the whole world,³⁴ evidence of its decline was all too visible. The church probably weathered the storms relatively well, but even its state was much diminished. When pope Boniface confronted his rival Eulalius in 418 he had been supported by some 70 priests, apparently nearly all of those in Rome. A synod presided over by Felix III in the 480s was attended by 81 priests, and another held in 499 was attended by 74 priests; the list of subscriptions runs to 67. The number of priests in the city thus seems to have fairly stable across the fifth century. Yet a synod Gregory convoked in 595 mustered only 35, whereas one summoned by Boniface III in 607 was attended by 33, and if we accept that the number of churches remained constant during the sixth century (above, p. 43), the clergy had come to be spread more thinly. Indeed, whereas in 499 something like a dozen churches had enjoyed the services of three priests, only one church did in 595, the titular church of Marcellus on the Via Lata. The maintenance there of three priests may have reflected a change in the distribution of the city's population, for it was not far from the Campus Martius, where people had been erecting what were described as hovels and huts at the very end of the fourth century, as we know from a law that sought to prohibit the practice. The importance of that area of Rome at that time is suggested by Vigilius's having dedicated an altar of a church of the eastern martyrs SS Cyricus and Julitta at the entrance

to the forum of Nerva prior to his departure for Constantinople, and pope John III's completion of work undertaken by his predecessor on a church near that of Marcellinus that was dedicated to SS Philip and James, the modern church of the Holy Apostles, and his dedication of it; however, it may be that these initiatives are to be seen as part of the move of the church into the monumental centre of the city rather than a response to the movement of people there.³⁵ But however the city's reduced population may have been distributed, the pattern of decline in the number of priests across the sixth century that is suggested by attendance at synods is broadly confirmed by the figures for ordinations contained in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Among the pieces of data it provides for every pope is that of the numbers of priests and deacons he ordained. Setting aside some short-term fluctuations, the figures reveal steady patterns across the period we have been considering. The popes from Innocent to Anastasius (401–498) are credited with ordaining 431 priests; on average, something like four a year. Ordinations to the priesthood continued at a similar rate during the first half of the sixth century, for the popes from Symmachus to Vigilius (498–555) are credited with 241 of them. But in the following 48 years, the popes from Pelagius I to Gregory I ordained only 146, suggesting a marked lessening in the demand for the services of priests in that period, and more generally the reduced circumstances of the city. The pattern of decline continued, for synods held in the first half of the eighth century were attended by only 19, 16, and 14 priests. Such data, which obviously have a significance beyond the field of church history, suggest that the greatest decline occurred in the second half of the sixth century.³⁶

If such decline were not depressing enough, Gregory became pope at a time when Rome was afflicted by an outbreak of the plague that had been a recurrent problem since it arrived in Italy in 543. Its first victim was believed to have been none other than pope Pelagius II. Gregory responded to the problem in a dramatic fashion by dividing the population of the city into seven groups that undertook processions on a Wednesday, traditionally a day of fasting, singing a seven-fold litany. Forms of prayer in which a leader would make a series of requests to God, to each of which the people gave a standard response, litanies were features of Eastern Christian worship that had become established in Rome by the time of Gelasius, who had introduced one into the mass, and were well suited to use in processions. These were synchronised. At about three o'clock the clergy started from the church of SS Cosmas and Damian, the abbots and their monks from the church of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, the abbesses and their nuns from the church of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter, the children from the church of the martyrs John and Paul, the laymen from the church of the protomartyr Stephen, the widows from the church of S Euphemia, and the married women from the church of

the martyrs Clement. The groups, each escorted by the priests of the region of the city from which it departed, converged on the church of Sta Maria Maggiore, the most central of the large basilicas and one that played an important part in the liturgical life of the city.³⁷ The people sang the Greek phrase 'Lord have mercy' as they processed. But in the space of one hour, 80 people fell to the ground and died. Several years later Gregory arranged a similar event, although the groups into which the people were arranged on this occasion and the order in which they are listed reveal a different way of understanding society: The clergy would depart from the church of John the Baptist, the men from the church of S Marcellinus, the monks from SS John and Paul, the nuns from SS Cosmas and Damian, the married women from S Stephen, the widows from the martyr Vitalis, and the poor and children from S Cecilia in Trastevere. If the destination was again Sta Maria Maggiore, the last group would seem, rather unfairly, to have had the longest walk.³⁸

We do not know what proportion of the city's population chose to participate in these street marches, but the ability of its bishop to organise them shows how central a figure he had become within Rome. Doubtless his eminence was partly due to the atrophy of the imperial administration and the disappearance of the senate, but it was also a sign of the expanded role religion had come to play in society, the calibre of many of the men who were becoming bishops, and the resources they were able to command. One of Gregory's public roles was preaching, and a fine marble throne believed to be that in which he sat while doing this is preserved at his family house, now known as the church of S Gregorio Magno. His sermons can be placed beside those of Leo I, the only pope of the period for whom we have a comparable body of material. Gregory's productions are more exegetical, being more concerned to work methodically through a passage of Scripture, although more inclined to go off on tangents; those of Leo are more doctrinal in content and, like his Tome, expressed with precision. Unlike Leo, Gregory is occasionally anecdotal. Not surprisingly, coming from someone whose exposition of the book of Job runs to 1,800 pages in a modern edition, Gregory's sermons were longer. Whereas Leo became concerned about having spoken for too long when he had delivered about 1,000 words, half of Gregory's sermons were twice as long as that, those which he delivered in person being notably longer than those read out on his behalf; perhaps the presence of a congregation stimulated him to greater efforts. In a sermon that contained a lengthy digression on the ranks of the angels Gregory extended himself to some 5,000 words, and reading between the lines he may have been aware of trespassing on the goodwill of his hearers.³⁹

In one of his sermons Gregory told his congregation, who were presumably well placed to judge the validity of his remark, that there was scarcely any

secular task that bishops did not carry out. They had long been accustomed to charitable activity, Augustine writing of crowds of poor being fed by the church, by no means a large one, of which he was bishop, and which maintained a list of people in need. In the third century the church of Rome provided for over 1,500 widows and other needy persons. Towards the middle of the sixth century a bishop of Tours distributed among the needy the very large sum of more than 20,000 solidi that his predecessors had accumulated. The obligation to be charitable was taken very seriously in Rome. In the fifth century, annual collections were taken in support of the needy, although these seem to have begun as a response to activities mounted by non-Christians. John the deacon described at length Gregory's generosity towards visitors to Rome, the clergy, the poor, nuns, and the sick. On one occasion, when 12 visitors were being entertained to lunch as was usual, Gregory counted 13 guests lying at table. When the treasurer protested that there were only 12, Gregory noticed that the appearance of one of them kept changing, and after the meal took him aside and asked him who he was. The guest replied that he was a shipwrecked person to whom Gregory had given some coins when he turned up at his monastery, as well as the silver dish on which his mother sent him vegetables. On that very day, the Lord had determined that Gregory would become pope. Flabbergasted, Gregory asked him how he knew these things, whereupon the stranger told him that he was his guardian angel. In John's day there could still be seen in the Lateran a big book, which he specifies as having been made of parchment, which contained the names of the recipients of his charity who lived in Rome, outside its walls, in nearby towns, and distant coastal cities, together with the times at which they received largesse and its quantities. It cannot be accidental that when Gregory organised some of his sermons on the Gospels for publication he placed at the end of the collection a strongly worded homily on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Such generous impulses would cause problems for his successor.⁴⁰

But charitable activity was not the only way in which bishops spent money. The income of the church of Rome was apportioned in accordance with a simple formula, which pope Simplicius made clear in 475 when he prescribed that the fixed income and offerings received by the church were to be divided between the bishop, the fabric of churches, distributions among visitors and the needy, and the clergy. Later popes mentioned the same categories, although listing them in a different order, that of the bishop, the clergy, the needy, and the fabric, or repair, of churches. The system was straightforward and functioned well, so that when pope Gregory II legislated for the infant church in Bavaria in the early eighth century he followed the example of his predecessors.⁴¹ But one of these areas of expenditure proved particularly

problematic.

Large churches had come to be well staffed. In the middle of the third century, that of Rome boasted 46 priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, 42 acolytes, and 52 exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers. The clergy of Carthage driven into exile by a Vandal king late in the fifth century numbered some 500 or more, although this figure included children who would not have been salaried. In the sixth century some 60 clergy were on the payroll of the church of Ravenna, whereas during the reign of Justinian the staff of the Great Church, a term used for the cathedral and several subordinate churches in Constantinople, comprised 60 priests, 100 deacons, 90 subdeacons, 110 readers, 25 singers, 100 doorkeepers, and 40 deaconesses.⁴² The pie from which clerical salaries came had to be cut into many slices, and the way in which this was done could cause tension between a bishop and his clergy. Towards the end of the sixth century a difficult situation arose in the church of Capua, and bishop Festus complained to Gregory that the clergy and citizens condemned and despised him. After Festus died the pope appointed bishop Gaudentius of Nola as visitor of the church, advising him not to make commitments concerning the promotions of the clergy and its income, ornaments, and sacred vessels. In a separate letter he informed the clergy of what he had told Gaudentius and instructed them to obey him. But discontent lingered, and after several months Gregory again wrote to Gaudentius, reminding him of the need to pay the clergy the quarter that was their due. This, he felt, would be a solace that would inspire them to perform their ministry and duty with greater devotion. Moreover, Gaudentius was to restore 10 solidi that the deceased bishop had taken from the archdeacon. A worse problem had developed in the church of Catania, where a dispute had broken out over a system whereby the clergy's quarter share was divided so that two-thirds went to what is described as the clerical body and one-third to 'those who had been put in a sacred place.' The terminology is difficult, but as a priest and two deacons are specified as having been among the clerical body, perhaps we are to see two thirds of the amount paid to the clergy as being divided among its most senior members, the priests and deacons. The clergy were concerned to get their fair share, and towards the end of the seventh century an archbishop of Ravenna is described as stealing their quarter, among other acts of meanness such as lessening the measures of wine. Such tensions would have been worse if we interpret an obscure utterance of pope Simplicius that the clergy were to be paid according to their merits as meaning that the bishops had the prerogative of paying different salaries to clergy of the same rank. Here are reminders that the clerical body of Rome cannot have been immune from jealousies and ill will, which more than one pope struggled to deal with, and during the seventh century there are clear signs of concern over payments to the clergy in Rome.⁴³

How could the church afford its expenditure? While appreciative of the offerings it received from the faithful, it relied far more on income derived from pieces of land it owned. In the early fourth century Constantine had endowed the large churches he founded in Rome with pieces of real estate that are variously described as estates, farms, gardens, properties, and islands. Whereas his benefactions allowed the church to become the proprietor of unexpected things such as a bathhouse, a bakery, and a tavern in the region of Antioch, and to derive oil, spices, papyrus stalks, and linen from assets elsewhere in the east, the rural properties he gave it were far more important, and generated an annual income of over 30,000 solidi, well over 400 lbs of gold. This was much less than well-off senatorial families drew from their estates, but the ability of the church to acquire new assets through donations assured that, in time, it would pull ahead of all secular landowners. By the fifth century people were donating land to the church for the benefit of their souls, and as it drew to a close pope Gelasius drew up a polyptych showing the revenue derived from every part of the patrimony, as it was coming to be called. Particularly extensive were the estates in Sicily, an island famous since the time of the Roman republic for its wheat. Its having escaped both the war between the Goths and the Byzantines and the attentions of the Lombards enhanced its importance; that six of the seven family estates Gregory disposed of were in Sicily is a sign of how central it had become to Rome. Whereas a suggestion that had been made that the estates of the church in Sicily were worked by 100,000 peasants who, with their dependents, would have numbered nearly half a million, is based on extrapolations that not all would be comfortable with, it has the merit of suggesting the enormity of the assets the church had come to own and the population that were employed on them.⁴⁴

The estates were overseen by 23 officials known as rectors, who covered a wide area: three operated in Sicily, 11 in a swathe of mainland Italy stretching from Calabria to Ravenna, and one each in Istria, Dalmatia, Illyricum, Sardinia, Corsica, Liguria, the Cottian Alps (the last two being apparently thought of as being distinct from the other regions of Italy), Germany, and Gaul. The administration of these holdings was a constant concern for popes. The very first of Gregory I's surviving letters, addressed to the bishops of Sicily, introduced to them the subdeacon Peter, whom he had placed in charge of the patrimony there, and his other letters are a valuable source of information on rural life; they contain no suggestion that peasants performed labour duties. The transport of grain from Sicily to Rome was on a scale large enough to require a standard procedure to be followed in case of shipwreck, and it will have been grain from the church's estates on the island that pope Vigilius, on his way to Constantinople, loaded onto ships and sent to Rome,

only for it to fall into the hands of Goths. In the seventh century the patrimony of the church of Ravenna in Sicily was able to send 16,000 solidi annually to the palace in Constantinople and 15,000 to the church in Ravenna, as well as grain, vegetables, sheep skins, clothing, and vessels. The patrimony was doing better than it had in the sixth century, when the church of Ravenna received 12,000 solidi from it. Whereas we lack comparable figures for the church of Rome, which would have enjoyed a significantly larger income, those for Ravenna give an idea of the scale of the revenue it drew from its estates.⁴⁵

Attacks mounted by Lombards were another issue popes had to deal with in this period. By the time of Gregory, the borders of the territory they occupied in Italy constituted an iron curtain, across which he does not seem to have attempted to send letters. Duke Ariulf of Spoleto, who was able to threaten communications between Rome and Ravenna, menaced Rome from 592, and peace was finally made with him in 598.⁴⁶ A more serious problem was caused by king Agilulf, who besieged the city in 593. Comments Gregory made in a homily on the book of Ezekiel delivered at this time suggest that he came near to despair: 'We see cities overthrown, fortifications turned upside down, the open country depopulated, churches undermined; yet we continue to follow our forefathers into iniquities, and do not turn away from the pride we have seen in them. And indeed, they sinned in the midst of joys, whereas we, something more serious, sin while being scourged.' He saw it as his job to protect the city against enemy swords in case its citizens perished in a sudden attack. At the end of 593, or the beginning of the following year, Gregory stopped preaching on Ezekiel in midstream, feeling unable to continue: 'Let no-one criticize me if I stop speaking after this, because, as you can all see, our tribulations are becoming greater. On all sides we are surrounded by swords, and we fear the chance of death that threatens from all sides. Some are coming back to us with their hands chopped off; we learn of others captured and others killed.'⁴⁷ The city ran short of food, but the siege was finally lifted. A story was told that Agilulf met Gregory on the steps of S Peter's and was so moved by his prayers, wisdom, and religious dignity that he called the siege off. In late 598 the king concluded peace, perhaps at the instigation of his Catholic wife Theode-linda, a correspondent of Gregory. But she was not the only woman with whom Gregory had important dealings.⁴⁸

Women

Celibate males who performed their duties surrounded by other men, clerics

can give the impression of leading cloistered lives. Sometimes, to be sure, they let their hair down. Commenting on the biblical injunction that deacons be not given too much wine (1 Tim 3: 8), Jerome launched into a tirade, powerful even by his standards, against drunken bishops, and a few decades later, pope Zosimus ordered that no member of the clergy was to engage in public drinking bouts; rather, they were to patronise cellars owned by the faithful, especially clergy. But such drinking may have been carried out in the company of other men, and we easily imagine the clergy leading lives in which women were of no importance. They were certainly not free to lead the public worship of the church, and when Gelasius heard that divine things were being held in such disrespect that women had been permitted to serve at the holy altars and to do all the things that, having been allotted to the service of men, members of their sex were not qualified to carry out, he found it intolerable. Disrespect was being shown for sacred things, and the bishops of the suburbicarian churches were told in no uncertain terms that such practices were to cease.⁴⁹

As has happened at other periods of history, it was possible for people in late antiquity to assume women were not important when evidence in front of their eyes showed otherwise. The better part of a century after the time of Leo, someone sat down in the archives of the church and counted the number of letters the pope had sent to the emperors Marcian and Leo, and the patriarch Flavian, but did not bother to tally the numerous ones he sent to the empress Pulcheria, important as many of these were.⁵⁰ The *Liber Pontificalis* provides the name of the father of almost every pope from S Peter, but their mothers remain unnamed. Yet bonds between sons and their mothers could be close. Some decades into the sixth century a widow, Turtura, was laid to rest in a cemetery just outside Rome. Despite outliving her husband by 36 years she had not remarried, but devoted herself to her son, who placed near a fresco that showed her in the presence of two martyrs, one of them in the act of presenting her to the Virgin and Child, an epitaph praising her, crediting her with having acted as his father as well as his mother.⁵¹ Stray bits of evidence suggest that mothers, and other females, may have been more important to popes that the *Liber Pontificalis* might be thought to imply. In the late fourth century pope Damasus arranged to be buried next to his mother and sister in a church which he had built; that he was elected pope in a church in the same area of the city suggests that his family may have been rooted in the area of the Campus Martius. Later, Felix III was buried in the same church as his wife, daughter, son, and another female relative. An inscription placed by the man who went on to become pope John VII mentioned his most kind and incomparable mother before it did his good-natured father. After Gregory II became pope his mother, Honesta, continued to live in the family home, and only after she died did her son turn it into a monastery. In the ninth century,

pope Paschal established in the church of S Prassede a funerary chapel for his mother Theodora, dedicated to S Zeno.⁵² But as usual, we have more evidence for Gregory I. Having turned his family home into a monastery, he placed in its atrium a portrait of his father, Gordianus, who was shown standing by the seated figure of S Peter, and another of the seated figure of his mother, Silvia. A copy of the latter portrait, and the accompanying words 'Gregory made this for his mother Silvia,' has come down to us; it suggests a strong yet sensitive woman. Someone who saw the pictures in the ninth century felt that Gregory's face resembled his father's in its length and his mother's in its roundness. Silvia kept in touch with her son after he became a monk, fondly sending special meals for him to the old family home, which he had turned into a monastery. For his part, Gregory did not forget his relatives on his mother's side when he became pope, for a few months after entering office he arranged for church funds to be used to support his cousins, the children of Silvia's sister Pateria.⁵³

Biographers of Gregory sometimes utilise such evidence to imply ways in which he was exceptional, but he cannot have been the only pope of the period to have been close to female relatives; rather, his peculiarity lies in the immense bulk of evidence we have for him. A strange story that was told of a pope of the early eighth century shows him being concerned for a female to whom he was related in a way that no-one was to Gregory. It was said that when the future pope Constantine came to Rome he brought with him his young daughter, whom he placed in a convent to be educated. Attracted by her beauty and her father's wealth, many men sought her hand in marriage, but after giving the matter some thought the pope decided that she would become a nun. Unfortunately, one of her suitors obtained the aid of a demon which duly possessed the young woman, and Constantine devoted much energy to seeking her recovery. This took some time, and the demon was only expelled after a complicated process that involved the Persian martyr Anastasius. As do so many women in history, the daughter remains nameless, but the account shows no surprise that a man with a daughter became a pope and that she continued to be part of his life.⁵⁴ Another female presence was constituted by a penumbra of the women whom some of the clergy had married before they took major orders. A Roman council held in 721 forbade women it described as *presbyterae* and *diaconae*, terms that can only mean the wives or widows of men who became priests or deacons, to remarry; its legislation may have been prompted by the case of the *diacona* Epiphania, who had taken a second husband and absconded with him. Gregory I knew of a priest whose *presbytera* leaned over him as he was dying, 40 years after he had been ordained; that he drove her away, fearing the excitement she could cause him, suggests that their matrimonial intimacy had not been forgotten, and a council

in Gaul found it worthwhile to legislate forbidding a priest to share a bed with his *presbytera* after receiving a blessing. Deacons and subdeacons were similarly restricted. Another council laid down that women were not to hang around a bishop who did not have an *episcopia*.⁵⁵

Women could influence the clergy in various ways. Clergy and wealthy women often sought each other out. When Ambrose of Milan visited Rome he was invited by a woman with the rank of *clarissima*, traditionally a very high rank (although it was being devalued at that time), to offer the sacrifice in her home in Trastevere. A law addressed to the pope of the time, Damasus, was read out in the churches of Rome, prohibiting clerics from approaching the homes of widows and orphans and gaining anything from the generosity of women, and prescribing that anything acquired by them in such a fashion was to pass to the state treasury. Enemies of Damasus claimed that matrons loved him so much that he was known as their ear pick. Legislation enacted in 390 prohibited deaconesses from leaving to members of the clergy property that should have passed to their children, but it was repealed after two months. The issue arose again in 455 when a woman had named a priest as one of her heirs, on which occasion the emperor Marcian confirmed that women were able to pass their wealth on to churches, the clergy, monks, and poor people; the central part of this law was later included in the Codex of Justinian. That benefactions made by women to the church could be valuable is suggested by a letter pope Celestine wrote to the eastern emperor Theodosius II in 432, asking him to keep a watchful eye over the properties that had been left to the church by Anicia Faltona Proba, an extremely well-connected woman, for her father, her husband, and three of her sons were consuls. In interpreting such evidence we need to set aside any suggestion of sexual innuendo and take it at face value: Women were known to be generous donors to the church, and could be cultivated for this reason. Women sometimes acted in concert with their husbands, as when Felix and Padusia financed from their own resources work on a mosaic in the Lateran late in the 420s, and when Albinus and Glaphyra paid out of their own resources for the building of a new basilica 27 miles out of Rome, which pope Symmachus dedicated to S Peter. An expectation that women were lavish in building churches underlies the implausible story that the empress Theodora built a church dedicated to S Pantalemon in the place where, living in poverty after coming to Constantinople from Paphlagonia, she had supported herself by spinning and weaving. But perhaps women who were unmarried, in particular widows, were the most likely donors. An unsettling story describes how, towards the end of the sixth century, a widowed queen in Gaul, feeling that her end was near, summoned a bishop and, after talking things over with him, arranged to leave legacies to three churches. ‘Virgins and Widows to the Rescue’ is the title of one of the chapters

of a book devoted to church finances.⁵⁶

It has been well observed that, whereas men wrote the texts on which we depend for most of our knowledge of this period and had them copied, elite women, no less than men, were able to commission images and monuments, and their activities in this sphere may open windows into their involvement in church affairs.⁵⁷ We have seen that the church of S Stefano Rotondo, erected by pope Simplicius, can be placed against a background of projects undertaken by women, and there is every reason to believe that the church of Rome benefitted enormously from the generosity of its female members. The names by which the 25 titular churches scattered around Rome were known in 499 are given in the list of subscriptions to a council held then, and 11 of them were female. One might think that they had been named after saints, as the church in Trastevere dedicated to Cecilia, a martyr in the time of Diocletian, certainly was. In their subscriptions to the proceedings of the synod one priest identified himself as being from the church of S Cecilia, and another from the church of Cecilia, without mention of her having been a saint. Again, one priest described himself as serving at the church dedicated to S Sabina, two simply to the church of Sabina. But in no other case do the subscriptions identify a female name by which a church was known with that of a saint, and as in many cases where no saint with a corresponding name is known we may reasonably assume that at least some of these churches were named after the women who had founded them.⁵⁸

Such a case definitely occurred early in the fifth century, when pope Innocent dedicated a basilica in honour of Gervasius and Protasius, two saints whose relics had been sensationally discovered in Milan a few decades earlier by bishop Ambrose. The church had been erected in accordance with provisions that Vestina, a woman who held the rank of *inlustris*, a higher one than that of the woman Ambrose had known in Trastevere, had made in her will. In this she had specified that some of her ornaments and pearls were to be sold to pay for the construction of the church, and she seems to have made additional provision for its running expenses. The records of the council of 499 mention no church dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius, but a titular church in the name of its founder, Vestina, that must have been the one she founded. In another case, one Lucina, when she was in the 19th year of a widowhood that followed her marriage of 15 years, was said to have dedicated her house in the name of pope Marcellus to be a titular church early in the fourth century, and a church named after her was functioning in 499. A later tradition that represents pope Pius dedicating a church at the request of Praxides in honour of her sister Pudenziana towards the middle of the second century is less likely to be true, but the transaction between Pius and Praxides it purports to describe is comparable to that known to have occurred between Innocent and

Vestina. It is tempting to link three of the titular churches, those of Anastasia, Crescentiana, and Aemiliana, with the names of women who are likely candidates to have founded churches. An Anastasia was mentioned in an inscription of the fifth century in S Peter's, which credits her husband and son with work on this basilica; Crescentia may have been connected with the Crescentius who is known to have left property in Sicily to the church; and the church of Aemiliana can plausibly be linked with another bearer of this name, a virgin who was buried in 489 and seems to have been a daughter of the later pope Felix III. Her name was current in the family generations later, when it was borne by the paternal aunt of pope Gregory I, and there is no reason why it would not have been earlier as well.⁵⁹

A good deal of this evidence is necessarily from the early centuries of the Roman church, but the pattern of generous female benefactors continued. Perhaps the most distinguished among them was another widow, Galla, who flourished early in the sixth century. She stood at the top of Roman society, being a daughter of the distinguished senator Symmachus, and one of her sisters had married Boethius, a close friend of pope John I and the accomplished author of important texts on theological, as well as other, subjects. Galla contracted a youthful marriage, but after one year she found herself a widow. Knowing her to be a woman of some ardour, the doctors advised that her hot bloodedness made it advisable for her to return to the embraces of a man, failing which she would grow a beard. This indeed happened, but the strong-willed young woman could not be tempted back into married life. Her attitude was in keeping with the tendency of the church not to look kindly on widows who remarried, one so strong that pope Gelasius had been forced to decree that a widow who took a second husband was nevertheless able to enter a church and take communion. Galla was strengthened in her convictions by a letter in praise of widowhood that an exiled African bishop had sent her, and proceeded to act with resolve. A chronicle written towards the end of the tenth century reports that on becoming a widow she built a number of churches on her estates, dedicated to such saints as Andrew, Laurence, John the Baptist, Peter, and Valentine the bishop. It is a curious and late piece of evidence, but we have no reason to doubt it, and the places assigned to these churches provide fascinating evidence for where some of the estates of a major senatorial family were located shortly before Italy was engulfed by years of destructive warfare. Whereas Galla's splurging seems to have been confined to building churches on properties she continued to own, it may not have allayed the nightmares of those who feared what a pious widow might do to a family's assets. She then entered a convent near S Peter's, where she spent the rest of her life.⁶⁰

Centuries later, at the time of pope Leo III (795–816), there stood near S

Peter's a monastery that, while it was dedicated to S Stephen, preserved Galla's name, for it was also known as 'cata Galla patricia'. Oddly enough, there is also mention of a monastery similarly dedicated to Stephen close to S Peter's that had been known as 'cata Barbara patricia' in the time of Leo's predecessor, pope Hadrian. We may reasonably suppose it to have been the one monastery to which the names of two women, Galla and Barbara, had become attached, and we may hazard a guess that the latter had been a person of that name who had been close to Gregory I when she was still a young woman. An old friend of her family, Gregory had hoped that Barbara and her sister were destined for the religious life, but they decided they would get married, whereupon he expressed the hope of seeing them joined to worthy husbands in S Peter's church. The sisters sent him two items of clothing, but the gift of their handiwork prompted the pope to adopt a tone that was light-hearted if not flirtatious, commenting that they may have been seeking to be praised for work done by someone else, for he found it easy to believe that they had never set their hands to a spindle. Perhaps Barbara, instead of or after marriage, entered the convent with which Galla had been associated, and was another of its benefactors, well enough remembered for her name to have been attached to it in addition to that of Galla. It must be said that, contrary to what the names by which the monastery was known imply, neither Galla nor Barbara seems to have held the rank of patrician, although the former was the daughter of one; but by the eighth century the title was being used more loosely than it had been earlier. The continued association of the monastery with Galla, one that survived a transition from its being an establishment for women to one for men, raises the possibility that she, no less than the women whose names lived on in the names of the titular churches, founded the establishment out of her own resources following the death of her husband. Those who founded religious institutions were able to decide to which saints they would be dedicated, and for Galla to have dedicated the convent to S Stephen would have been in keeping with the taste of her period. In the time of pope Leo, a virgin had erected a church in his honour on an estate; the following pope, Hilary, had named a praetorium and a chapel in his honour, and the pope who came after him, Simplicius, had dedicated the church of S Stefano Rotondo. Attributing the foundation of the religious house to Galla would allow it to be placed at the end of a period of great enthusiasm for the saint within Rome.⁶¹

Whereas Galla was a member of an important family, her activities made her a significant figure in the history of the Roman church in her own right. The same was true of a later member of the family, Gregory's correspondent Rusticana. In around 600 she was living in Constantinople. She shared her name, an uncommon one, with the daughter of Symmachus who had married Boethius, who seems to have come to a sad end, for we last hear of her in 546,

clad in cheap clothes begging for bread in Rome. The later Rusticiana was certainly in Rome at some point of her life and owned estates in Italy, circumstances that make it the more plausible to see her as having been connected with the land-owning Galla. Rusticiana was a useful woman for a pope to know, for she sent Gregory money to be used in redeeming captives and some tapestries, goods for which the East was renowned and which she clearly anticipated would be received with gratitude, for she expected them be carried into S Peter's to the accompaniment of a litany, and Gregory was apologetic that this had not been done. He naturally turned to her for advice when Barbara and her sister were in difficulties. Rusticiana had a poem written on the Nativity of Christ that apparently accompanied a picture that she sent Gregory as a present, and may also have commissioned an icon of S Peter at Mount Sinai that portrayed the saint in a manner that, it has been suggested, gave subtle expression to views that Gregory was expounding on the ministry of the apostle Peter. The key pieces of evidence we have for Galla and Rustiniana, like so much for that of the church in these centuries, come from the works of Gregory I, within which they can be located within a broader pattern, for the correspondence of that pope mentions something like a dozen women who founded churches and monasteries in southern Italy, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia; as is often the case, Gregory's correspondence is not as full on life within Rome itself as we would like. Our evidence is therefore skewed towards a particular period. But the process of women transferring land to the church that was already under way in the time of the widow Vestina was still operating at the end of the period covered by this book, when Anna, the widow of the first among the church's notaries, gave pieces of land to S Peter.⁶²

It would be possible to argue that the church was benefiting from such generous women, but a group of other women provide very firm evidence for female involvement with more than one bishop of Rome on an issue which forwarded their own agenda. As we have seen, when the epochal council of Chalcedon met in 451 it was in a church dedicated to a martyr of the early fourth century, S Euphemia, and thereafter signs of her cult appear repeatedly in circles sympathetic to that council. When Justin, a strong supporter of the doctrine promulgated at that council, became emperor in 518, the name of his wife, Lupicina, that may have suggested to speakers of Latin that she had been a prostitute, was changed to Euphemia, and the couple were believed to have been buried together in a convent dedicated to the saint. Some years after the council had taken place, a woman named Licinia Eudoxia began work on a church dedicated to Euphemia in Constantinople. Construction on it was continued by her daughter Placidia, and was brought to completion by her own daughter, Anicia Juliana; despite the second and third generations having

married into other families, responsibility for the ongoing project was transmitted from mother to daughter.⁶³ The women who built the church were members of the very highest level of Byzantine society. Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius II, who had written to her father shortly before the council met, had been successively married to the emperors Valentinian III and Petronius Maximus, and then the Vandal king Huneric; Placidia, her daughter by her first husband, married Olybrius, after whom the area in Constantinople where the church was being built was named and who, at the end of his life, was briefly emperor in the West. Juliana married a general known for his adherence to the council of Chalcedon, who had prudently fled when a mob who opposed the religious policies of the emperor Anastasius proposed to make him emperor instead in 512. It was she who brought to completion another, gigantic church, that dedicated to S Polyeuktos, that her great-grandmother had founded. Not only the church itself, but the long dedicatory epigram that could be read at its entrance, in which Juliana was described as being, after Constantine, the one who had adorned his Rome, and as having surpassed the wisdom of the temple-building Solomon, have been seen as provoking as a response the erection of the great church of Hagia Sophia by Justinian in the following decade.⁶⁴

These women took their adherence to the council of Chalcedon very seriously, in particular the feisty Juliana, who refused to take communion from the man who became patriarch of Constantinople in 511, Timothy, because of his opposition to the council, despite his paying her frequent visits. When the monk Sabas, another firm supporter of the council, settled just outside Constantinople, Juliana often visited him with a friend, and after she died her eunuchs joined his monastery.⁶⁵ The compiler of the *Collectio Avellana* found in the archives of the Roman church a letter pope Simplicius had sent to the emperor Zeno through Peter, a man in Placidia's service, in 478, and two letters Juliana had sent Hormisdas concerning the resolution of the Acacian Schism in 519, as well as a reply from the pope. One other curious circumstance links Juliana with the popes. The historiographical tradition concerning the great emperor Constantine was confused. Writing in Rome towards the middle of the fifth century, the chronicler Prosper failed to connect his victory at the Milvian Bridge with religion, and does not mention his role in the council of Nicaea, although it observes that peace was returned to the Christians through him, that he issued an edict overthrowing the temples of the pagans, and that he sent letters to the monk Anthony. It is an oddly weighted narrative, and its omissions were probably caused by the embarrassing fact that, as Prosper knew, at the end of his life Constantine went astray, and was baptised into the Arian dogma. As happened more than once in the history of the church, an alternate version developed, and the report of a

Byzantine historian of the sixth century, John Malalas, was much more buoyant, for he felt that Constantine, his mother, all his relatives, and many other Romans had been baptised by pope Silvester. On a wall at the church of S Polyuktos for which Juliana was responsible was a portrayal of Constantine cleansing his limbs in water. This can only refer to his baptism, a topic that was coming to interest people in the east. One suspects the mosaic installed by Juliana, the correspondent of Hormisdas, did not depict a heretical clergyman performing the ceremony, but showed Silvester taking a prominent part.⁶⁶

Beyond Rome

Despite the enfeebled state of the city, the church of Rome remained at the centre of the universal church. One way of measuring its reach is provided by the earliest diffusion of Gregory's works, which often began with their author despatching presentation copies soon after they were completed. Three of his works contain dedicatory letters. A copy of his greatest work, the *Exposition of Job*, was sent in 595 to an old friend from his time in Constantinople, Leander, who had gone on to become bishop of Seville, with a dedicatory letter in which the pope reminded him of the talks they used to have. The work quickly became known elsewhere, for in 600 the praetorian prefect of Africa asked him for a copy, a request that Gregory deflected by recommending that he read the works of his fellow African Augustine instead, and he was disturbed to hear two years later that bishop Marinianus of Ravenna was having it read out during the service of vigils. Marinianus had been a monk in the same community as Gregory, so it is not surprising that he had a copy; nor is it surprising that Gregory was uneasy at the prospect of a work that, in its original form, had been directed to monks becoming widely known to a secular audience.⁶⁷ An introductory letter to the *Pastoral Care* was addressed to a bishop John, probably to be identified as Marinianus's predecessor as bishop of Ravenna, another Roman, who had been placed in office by pope Pelagius II. Marinianus himself had a copy of the book in which its author had inscribed a personal message to the effect that the book had been written for him. In 594 Gregory asked the bishop of Luni, a town in northern Italy, to pass on a copy of the work to the priest Columbanus, an Irish monk then living in Gaul, with a request that the bishop not keep it for his own use, for Gregory was soon going to send him his own copy. Columbanus later informed Gregory that he found his *Pastoral Care* sweeter than honey, and asked him to send the second part of his work on Ezekiel, and part of his writing on the

Song of Songs. At the request of the emperor Maurice, the pope's representative in Constantinople gave him a copy of the *Pastoral Care*, and a bishop of Antioch translated it into Greek; but Gregory expressed his displeasure at both these happenings.⁶⁸ According to the dedicatory letter to his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory sent a copy of this work, after bringing it to its final form some eight years after the addresses on which it was based had been delivered, to his old friend Marinianus, at his request; the terms in which Gregory addressed Marinianus are much more intimate than those he used when addressing John. He sent two books of homilies to a hermit, Secundinus, in 599. It is unclear whether they were his Homilies of Ezekiel or those on the Gospels, as both were divided into two books; but as he only finished revising the former a few years later it may well be that the hermit received a copy of the latter. Gregory's concern for the circulation of his works may even have extended to England, for 300 years later king Alfred believed that Augustine had brought a copy of his *Pastoral Rule* there; if this were so, it suggests that Augustine's elevation to the episcopate was already planned. It has also been argued that a surviving fragment of the Homilies on the Gospels may have been part of a text that accompanied Augustine to Canterbury. Gregory may even have been responsible for the preservation of his correspondence, for a Spanish author, Ildefonsus of Toledo, credits him with bringing together his letters into one volume, dividing it into 12 books, and ordering that it be called the register.⁶⁹

One can only be struck by Gregory's desire for people to read his works, and the importance of ties of personal friendship in his choice of recipients. Most copies were sent to people in Italy, in particular Ravenna; others were despatched to Spain, Gaul, and, apparently, England. He does not seem to have taken steps to see that they circulated in Africa, or the East. His apparent disinterest in the latter may represent a broader issue.

Byzantium

The contrast between Rome in its diminished and impoverished condition and the size and opulence of Constantinople will have struck Gregory when he arrived in the royal city to represent the interests of the Roman church in about 580. The culture and learning of the East fascinated Romans, as they had since the time of the Roman republic. Not long after works that were attributed to S Paul's convert Dionysius the Areopagite appeared in Greek some decades into the sixth century, it was believed that all his works were kept in a library

in Rome, and whereas this is unlikely it is certain that a passage in a homely preached by Gregory is based on a translation of the Celestial Hierarchies.⁷⁰ The centrality of the city gave him opportunities for networking that would have been unthinkable in Rome. During the sixth century it had become the centre of Latin intellectual life. In its early decades an African, Priscian, wrote his influential Latin grammar there; it was there that an Illyrian, Marcellinus Comes, an African, Victor of Tunnuna, and, possibly, Jordanes, a man of Gothic ancestry, wrote their histories. Cassiodorus, a scholar second to none among the authors of late antiquity in the breadth of his interests, spent some time there, whereas another Italian, the deacon Rusticus, did important work on the church councils while living in the city. Doubtless its star had waned by the time Gregory arrived, although a man from Spain who would go on to write an important chronicle, John of Biclaro, had recently lived there, and it was there that Gregory met another Spaniard who would become a significant figure in public life, Leander. He was close enough to the emperor Maurice to become the godfather of his first son, Theodosius, who owed his name to being the first presumptive heir to have been born in the imperial quarters since Theodosius II had entered the world at the beginning of the fifth century. Whereas the name of Maurice's second son, Tiberius, was a tribute to the preceding emperor, whose daughter he had married, the names of the following two, Peter and Paul, are unexpectedly Roman, and one might suspect the influence of Gregory in their selection.⁷¹

But when Gregory became pope his relations with Maurice were uneasy. He was unhappy when the emperor restricted the ability of civil servants or soldiers to join the ranks of the clergy or monks, and wrote with powerful rhetoric against this, although he concluded his letter by stating that he had nevertheless, as a loyal subject, transmitted the law through different regions. Four years later he transmitted very similar legislation in a letter sent to an odd assortment of bishops: those of Thessaloniki, Dyrrachium, Milan, Nicopolis, Corinth, Prima Justiniana, Crete, Scutari, Larissa, Ravenna, and Cagliari, and all the bishops of Sicily. It was a curious distribution list, but those outside Italy were in a special relationship with Rome, for Gregory later wrote to them warning them not to be tricked into giving the patriarch of Constantinople a title which he had improperly claimed. Following the withdrawal of the bishop of Aquileia into schism, Milan and Ravenna were the remaining metropolitan churches in northern Italy, and the bishops of Sicily may have been suspected of being more likely to have ties with the church of Constantinople than those of the suburbicarian churches on the mainland. We catch a sight of Gregory acting in the capacity of a patriarch transmitting the emperor's legislation to the metropolitans who were subordinate to him in imperial territory, just as Justinian had expected to occur when he legislated

concerning monks. Another letter to Maurice was written after the emperor had rebuked him for having dealt with the Lombard duke of Spoleto, Ariulf, in a foolish manner. Defending himself against the accusation, Gregory listed the ways in which the Empire had failed him: A peace he had negotiated with Lombards in Etruria without any cost to the Empire had been taken away; soldiers had been removed from Rome and stationed at Narni and Perugia, presumably to deal with Ariulf, whose base in Spoleto was not far away (although Gregory claimed that their withdrawal left Rome without defences); king Agilulf had come and led Romans away as though they were dogs; and Gregory himself had been blamed for the shortage of food that occurred when Rome was besieged. One has the sense of Gregory expressing resentments that had built up over time.⁷²

The letter is strongly expressed, and ends in a curious way: 'I return to tears alone, praying that the same almighty God may both rule our most pious lordship with his hand here and in that terrible judgment may find him free of all sins, and that he makes me please men, if it is necessary, in such a way that I do not offend against his eternal grace.' Gregory was clearly highly displeased with the emperor, for rather than comforting the ruler with an assurance of his prayers he simply mentions that he is asking God to grant things to both the emperor and himself. But perhaps we can go further. The language and ideas in this sentence recall the final portion of Gregory's *Exposition of Job*, which begins with him returning to himself, mentions the problems that pleasing men can cause, and terminates with a request for prayer to be directed to the Judge and for tears to be shed. Gregory sent a copy of his *Exposition of Job* to Leander of Seville in the month after he wrote to Maurice. He had begun this work when in Constantinople, but continued to work on it after returning to Rome, and it is reasonable to suppose that he completed his labours not long before he sent a copy to Leander. If this were so, whether consciously or not, Gregory would have been defining his relations with Maurice in the same terms he used to complete his enormous book, surely a sign of how heartfelt his feelings were.⁷³

According to a ninth-century author, Maurice became more and more inclined towards hating Gregory and speaking evil of him.⁷⁴ But in November 602 he was overthrown by a junior army officer, Phocas, who sent an image of himself and his wife Leontia to Rome. A document inserted into the register of Gregory's letters that describes its reception on 25 April shows full awareness of the blood-stained origin of Phocas's power, for it mentions the murder of the preceding emperor, his five sons, his brother, and two other senior people, all of whom are named. Whereas the status of this text is not clear, it makes it highly likely that Gregory knew that Phocas had murdered the emperor and his family, with whom he had been on close terms when he was in

Constantinople, and one of whom he had baptised. Nevertheless, the document describes an image of Phocas being received in the Lateran, where the clergy and senate (the word must have been used in a loose sense) acclaimed it in traditional language: 'Hear, Oh Christ! Life to Phocas the augustus, and to Leontia the augusta!' This having been done, Gregory ordered that it be placed in a chapel dedicated to S Caesarius in the palace, which had probably been founded during the sixth century. According to traditional protocol, new emperors in the West had been expected to send portraits of themselves to Constantinople, and Phocas would have been following this procedure in reverse. Scattered pieces of evidence allow us to see emperors sending such images to the west in late antiquity, and an illustration in a book of the Gospels that was probably drawn in Italy in the second half of the sixth century, the Rossano Gospels, shows how people responded to them. It depicts Christ on trial before Pontius Pilate, behind whom are images of the royal family, towards which people extend their right arms. The central role taken by Gregory in the reception of the image suggests the role the bishop had come to play in even the secular life of the city, as well as his complicity in the blood-stained beginnings of the new reign. In the following month Gregory sent Phocas and Leontia enthusiastic letters, beginning 'Glory to God in the highest!' and expressing his happiness at the elevation of the new emperor. Scholars have pored over the letter seeking explanations for its subservient language. Perhaps the best that can be said is that it is remarkably short by the standards of Gregory's letters to Maurice, and that Phocas's murderous conduct may have made allegiance to him seem a matter of prudence.⁷⁵

The patriarchs of Constantinople fared no better than its emperors in Gregory's eyes. In a letter sent to Maurice that seems to have accompanied his letter on the Lombards, he delivered himself of the opinion that the bishops of the city had included not only heretics but heresiarchs.⁷⁶ The charge could easily be substantiated, Gregory being able to remind the emperor of Nestorius, who taught that there were two persons in Christ, and Macedonius, who was thought to have denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Gregory was not the first pope to have thought like this, and his sense that the East was not to be trusted was one he shared with others in the West. Some of those who made copies of a translation into Latin of the proceedings of the council of Nicaea that had been produced in the seventh century noted the absence of bishops from the West, and found this easy to account for: There was no need for their names to be written down, because no suspicion of heresy was attached to them! But in Gregory's case the charge of heresy may have owed something to personal experience. Not long after his arrival in Constantinople he had a major falling out with the patriarch Eutychios, who, despite having been deposed at one period, was still in office decades after being appointed by

Justinian. Eutychios was of the opinion that bodies would not be able to be handled after the resurrection, as they would be subtler than the wind or air. Against this, Gregory argued that, whereas resurrected bodies would indeed be subtle, their very nature would nevertheless make them able to be handled, as had been the case with the body of the Lord after he rose from the dead. The controversy became heated, each man quoting texts from the Bible that seemed to support his view, and showed no sign of ending. The emperor summoned them both for talks, and ordered that a book Eutychios had written on the subject be consigned to the flames. By now each of the antagonists was exhausted. Gregory fell seriously ill, while the elderly Eutychios soon died. Gregory claimed to have heard that Eutychios repented of his false doctrine at the very end of his life, but the pupil who wrote the patriarch's biography did not mention this, and indeed defended him against unnamed foolish people who failed to understand what he taught concerning the resurrection.⁷⁷

After he returned to Rome, Gregory had to deal with another difficult patriarch of Constantinople. For some time eastern authors had occasionally applied the adjective 'ecumenical' to the most senior bishops. In the fifth century an Alexandrian deacon, Theodore, had referred to a pope as 'ecumenical archbishop and patriarch', and the expression is frequently applied to the patriarch of Constantinople in the laws of Justinian known as the Novels, although the versions of them in Latin suggest some uneasiness at its use.⁷⁸ In 587 the successor to Eutychios, John, held a synod in Constantinople at which he was accorded the title ecumenical patriarch. Pope Pelagius reacted with violence, annulling the acts of the synod and forbidding his representative in Constantinople from concelebrating the liturgy with John. Gregory inherited the controversy when he became pope. In a letter to John written shortly after entering office he refrained from raising the issue. But when he wrote to him two years later introducing his new apocrisiarius, Sabinianus, he used language heavy with irony, claiming that letters he had received in the name of John had surely been written by someone other than the John he had known at Constantinople. In June 595 Gregory launched an all-out campaign, writing on the subject to Maurice, the empress Constantina, and the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. Some of his correspondents seem to have found the issue, or Gregory's presentation of it, difficult to take seriously, and years later the patriarch of Alexandria disconcerted him by addressing him as 'universal pope'.⁷⁹ Gregory may have been misled by a faulty translation of the Greek, for the Latin version on which he relied rendered the term 'ecumenical patriarch' as 'universal patriarch'. This may have led Gregory to conclude that John was claiming that he alone was a bishop, which is precisely what Gregory accused him of when writing to the empress: How sad it was, Gregory opined, that his brother and fellow bishop

despised everyone in attempting to be called the only bishop. Such pride, he felt, was a sign that the times of the Antichrist were near.⁸⁰ But this was one of his battles that Gregory was destined to lose. 10 years after he had raised the matter with John he criticised his successor, Kyriakos, for continuing use of the title, but in language less apocalyptic than that he had used earlier. The author of the preface to a translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* into Greek refers to the translator, pope Zacharias, as 'ecumenical pope', and to this day the patriarch of Constantinople is referred to as the ecumenical patriarch.⁸¹

Yet Gregory remained the emperors' loyal subject, who addressed them and their wives by their traditional title, 'your serenity'. A term marking an inferior status, 'your excellency', was used to address the emperor's sister and imperial high officials such as exarchs, patricians, and praetorian prefects, and this was the word Gregory used for Germanic kings and queens in the West; another group of correspondents, both imperial subjects and Visigothic kings, were addressed not by an abstract noun but an adjective suggesting a somewhat lower dignity, 'glorious'. The text of a letter Gregory sent the English king Æthelberht, preserved by the English historian Bede, addresses him as his most glorious and exceedingly eminent son and its concluding protocol refers to his excellence, although these terms are lacking in the version of the letter in Gregory's correspondence.⁸² Similar distinctions are apparent in Gregory's choice of gifts for various people. When he needed a favour from the Merovingian king Childebert he sent filings from the links from the chains of Peter, in the shape of a key, informing the king that it would protect the person who wore it around the neck from all harm. But this was a standard gift, which Gregory directed to numerous senior officials in imperial service, often with a similar statement of the benefits that could be expected from it. Members of the imperial family could expect more. He told the empress Constantina that he would send her part of the chains that S Paul had worn around his neck and carried in his hands, if he succeeded in filing a part off, the only indication in his correspondence of Gregory personally participating in the manufacture of a gift of this kind. Theoctista, the emperor's sister, was sent a key of Peter with a strange history, it having been the one Authari had sent to pope Pelagius II after the death of the Lombard who had tried to hack a piece of it off. The key remained in Rome until 597, when Gregory decided to give it to Theoctista. Both terminology and gifts show Gregory slotting the Germanic sovereigns who had come to rule in the West into a traditional worldview: Distinct from the emperor, they in some way corresponded to his officers. These were people popes could not avoid having dealings with.⁸³

The West

The surviving correspondence of Gregory suggests that after he had been pope for about five years his gaze began to turn more towards the west, where he would be best remembered for sending preachers to England. Whereas many modern Christians regard evangelisation as a central task of the church, it has to be said that there is little sign of the journeys for that purpose described in the Acts of the Apostles being imitated in the centuries that immediately followed. The triumphalism that followed the Christianisation of the Empire made complacency easy, at least among those who stood near its centre. Ambrose believed that, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world having reached the point that the Goths and Armenians had become believers, the end of the world was at hand, whereas pope Leo believed that the number of the ungodly was dying away, the faith having been multiplied across the world. Augustine, more realistically, knew of countless peoples he thought of as barbarians to whom the Gospel had not been preached.⁸⁴ The lack of interest in converting non-believers outside the Empire continued to be displayed when such people, whether they were non-Christians or heretics, occupied imperial territory in the west during the fifth century. The conversion of groups such as the Franks and, as we shall see, the Visigoths seems to have been undertaken by themselves, perhaps as part of a more widespread adoption of things associated with Rome. Seen in this light, Gregory's sending preachers to convert the people of the Angles, or English as we would now call them, was an unexpected move.

Stories were later told that Gregory, after seeing slaves from Britain exposed for sale in the forum, formed a resolve to go there to preach and convert the people, and had gained the approval of pope Benedict to do this, but was prevented by the people of Rome from doing so.⁸⁵ According to the historian Bede, who wrote in the early eighth century, he fulfilled his desire by sending others as soon as he became pope; but this judgment was incorrect, for it was only in September 595 that Gregory told his agent Candidus to buy English slaves in Gaul who would become monks, an act which can plausibly be connected with planning for the mission, and it was in the following July that a group of monks who were later remembered as having numbered nearly 40 finally set forth from Rome. They were led by Augustine, who had held a position of leadership in Gregory's old monastery; as he often did, Gregory entrusted a key job to a person he knew well.⁸⁶ They were well received by king Æthelberht of Kent, who was already familiar with Christianity through his Frankish wife, Bertha, and their preaching bore fruit.⁸⁷ Writing to the patriarch of Alexandria in 598, Gregory shared the astonishing news he had

received from Augustine that over 10,000 English had been baptised at the preceding Christmas. The figure is suspiciously high, and easily trumps the 3,000 members of his army said to have joined the Frankish king Clovis when he was baptised; however, Augustine's work was clearly successful. By the time he performed the mass baptism, Augustine had been ordained a bishop on the Continent, and he proceeded to act as many bishops did, sending the pope queries concerning difficulties that had arisen in carrying out his work, to which answers were formally given. The terms Bede used for the queries (*consulta*) and answers (*responsiones*) are the formal language of papal decretals, and Gregory's answers would duly take their place in the body of canon law, although they would create difficulties.⁸⁸ In 601 Gregory turned his mind to the organisation of the new church, and instructed Augustine that there were to be two metropolitan bishops, one based at London and the other at York, each of whom would have 12 bishops under him. As long as Augustine lived, he would be the senior metropolitan; thereafter, the one who had been ordained first was to have precedence over the other. Again, this simple system broke down. The bishop of Canterbury, not London, would become the metropolitan in the south, and claim authority over his colleague in York irrespective of who had been ordained first.⁸⁹

Whereas Gregory's work may seem to fit naturally into a narrative of Christian missionary activity, he never uses a word that can be translated as 'missionary'. Rather, he thought of Augustine as the foremost among a group of preachers. The task of preaching was one Gregory took very seriously. He thought that the church in the present world was like a military camp divided into three groups: preachers who sought to collect souls, people living in continence who prepared themselves for daily battles against evil spirits in their hearts, and good married people who lived in accordance with the love of God. Or, reversing the order of the categories, the church could be envisaged as a city that contained people who were married, people who had left the world, and people who preached the word of life to their hearers, supplying what they needed for their souls and bodies. Whereas Gregory was an enthusiast for the contemplation that could be carried out in a monastery, he regarded preaching as a more important activity. Hence, in sending preachers to the English, Gregory was seeing to the exercise of a central function within the church, and his extending it into territory that had ceased to be part of the Empire nearly 200 years earlier may not have been all that big a step. In laying down that there were to be metropolitan bishops in London and York, Gregory exactly reproduced the structure of Roman Britain, where these had been the chief cities, which had already been replicated in the structure of the church that was developed there in Roman times, for the subscription lists of the council that met in Arles in 314 included the names of Hibernius, the bishop of York,

and Restitutus, the bishop of London. Moreover, as we have seen, his use of titles and distribution of gifts suggests that he saw Germanic leaders as somehow being part of a world of which the Empire was the centre, a perception that sometimes took unexpected forms.⁹⁰

Among the vestments worn by the pope was the pallium, a band of wool-len material placed around the shoulders. Sometimes popes conceded the privilege of wearing a pallium to other senior bishops, but they were not the only ones who bestowed this right. Bishop John of Ravenna was later thought to have been the first of the bishops of that church to receive a pallium from an emperor, this being Valentinian III (425–455). There are good reasons to be suspicious of this tradition, but when bishop Victor of Ravenna died in 545, the people asked Justinian to grant a pallium to their preferred candidate; however, as we have seen, pope Vigilius obeyed Justinian's instruction to ordain someone else, Maximianus. Having been supplied with a pallium, Maximianus was sent to Ravenna, where a mosaic in the church of S Apollinare Nuovo shows him wearing it; anachronistically, a mosaic in the nearby church of S Apollinare in Classe shows the bishop after whom both churches were named as wearing one as well. It is not clear whether Justinian or Vigilius bestowed the pallium on Maximianus, but in the seventh century it was certainly the emperor who gave one to bishop Maurus when he was in Constantinople, and on his deathbed Maurus advised whoever would follow him as bishop to seek the pallium from the emperor. When pope Gregory conceded bishops the right to wear a pallium he always specified that it was only to be worn in church while celebrating mass, and was therefore horrified to hear that bishop John of Ravenna was wearing his pallium in processions through the streets, and challenged him to provide evidence that he had been given the right to do this. John defended himself robustly, claiming that he was doing nothing new, and after Gregory forbade him to continue the practice John had powerful laypeople put pressure on the pope to reverse the decision. As so often, Gregory was forced to compromise. He allowed John to wear the pallium during processions on four occasions annually, and asked his legate in Constantinople to find out whether metropolitan bishops wore the pallium during processions. But when it was claimed that the bishops of Ravenna had traditionally worn their pallia on processions every day, Gregory resorted to having senior members of the church of Ravenna swear an oath as to what the traditional practice was; three years later he was still seeking information. The church of Ravenna was to cause popes more serious problems later, but for the time being we may note the claims that, at some stages of its history, the emperor bestowed the pallium that caused so much controversy. The same thing occurred elsewhere, for on one occasion Gregory told the Frankish queen Brunhild that his deacon in Constantinople had obtained the approval of the

emperor for a pallium to be granted to the bishop of Autun. The dichotomies between the Roman and post-Roman West, and between the post-Roman West and Byzantium, were not as great for Gregory as they may seem to us.⁹¹

Gregory's triumph in England was not repeated everywhere. In 587 the Visigothic king Reccared renounced the traditional anti-Nicene convictions of his people and accepted the Catholic faith, a change of allegiance that was sealed two years later when the bishops of his kingdom attended a council held in what its proceedings described as the royal city, Toledo. The council met on the order of the king and his signature was the first in the list of subscriptions, coming ahead of those of the bishops. As one contemporary saw it, Reccared had recreated the examples of Constantine the Great, whose presence had made the council of Nicaea famous, and that of Marcian, at whose instance the decrees of the council of Chalcedon were confirmed. His achievement was seen as a significant one in the broad sweep of history, for he was thought of as having brought to a definitive end the heresy that had taken its beginning in Alexandria in the 20th year of the reign of Constantine. Moreover, the king ordered that in the liturgy the creed of the council of Constantinople was to be recited before the Lord's Prayer, just as it was in the eastern churches. After Reccared and his wife Baddo indicated their acceptance of the Catholic faith by signing their names, the bishops burst into a series of acclamations of God and the king, describing the latter among other things as one who had acquired new peoples for the Catholic church, and as one who in truth deserved a reward befitting an apostle, for he had fulfilled the office of an apostle. An edict issued by Reccared was incorporated into the proceedings of the council, ordering that no-one in his kingdom was to despise or neglect what it had defined.⁹²

Reccared's actions were those of an emperor. He summoned a council, ordered that a change be made to the liturgy, and followed in the footsteps of Constantine and Marcian. Even in fulfilling the office of an apostle he was doing as Constantine had done, for that emperor had traditionally been styled 'equal to the apostles'. The word the chronicler used for the office Reccared held (*princeps*) was the same he used for that held by Constantine and Maurice. What role was there for the pope in such a quasi-imperial setup? Gregory may have been disappointed at the part his old friend Leander played in these developments. The matters of faith that had taken Leander to Constantinople, but apparently not Rome, on behalf of the Visigoths in the 580s were presumably connected with the forthcoming passage of the king to Catholicism, and Leander gave a homily at the council held in Toledo in 589. Replying to a letter he received from Leander in 591, Gregory expressed his joy at knowing of Reccared's conversion, stating that Leander's description of the king's character had made him love someone he did not know. But there is an

odd undertone in the points Gregory went on to make, and it is clear that the king had failed to be in touch with the pope. It was only towards the end of the century that Reccared wrote to Gregory. The poor quality of the Latin in the letter indicates that the words are those dictated by the king, without any revision, and the reasons he clumsily adduced for the pope not having heard from him were thoroughly implausible. Reccared claimed that he had been very busy, that a group of abbots he had sent had been shipwrecked almost in sight of Italy, although as the incident is said to have occurred near Marseilles they still had a good way to go, and that bodily sickness had prevented a priest Gregory had sent to Spain, apparently without an expectation of seeing the king, from accepting Reccared's invitation to visit. But at last Reccared was pleased to commend to the pope Leander, presumably the bearer of his letter, to send a golden chalice, ornate with gems, as a gift, and ask for Gregory's prayers. Gregory replied at far greater length, and the gifts that accompanied his letter were extraordinarily generous. In addition to the usual key containing iron from the chains of S Peter, which Gregory assured him would absolve him from all his sins, a higher claim for the power of such a device than had been made to any other correspondent, the pope sent him a cross containing some wood from the Cross of the Lord and hairs of John the Baptist. Finally, Gregory sent a pallium for bishop Leander. The scale of the gifts Gregory sent suggests that he was seeking the goodwill of the person to whom they were sent more than he usually did.⁹³

Reading between the lines it is possible to detect compromise and weakness in other areas of Gregory's activity. He could be evasive on the question of how many ecumenical councils there had been. On becoming pope Gregory sent a long synodical letter, a formal document in which a newly elected pope or other high-ranking leader of the church expressed his faith, to the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, and the former patriarch of Antioch. In it, Gregory professed that he accepted and venerated four councils, those of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesos, and Chalcedon, as if they were the four gospels. They resembled a square stone reposing on four sides on which the faith was based. But this sense of necessary completeness is shattered by what follows: 'I also venerate equally the fifth council.'⁹⁴ In a letter he planned to send to the Lombard queen Theodelinda, a supporter of the Three Chapters, Gregory defended things that were done at the time of Justinian, a vague allusion to the council that had met in 553 very similar to one he had used in the third of the letters he wrote on behalf of pope Pelagius II to bishop Elias. These things, Gregory asserted, were in conformity with the council of Chalcedon. Gregory asked Constantius, the bishop of Milan, to transmit his letter to the queen, but Constantius refused to do this, for the letter mentioned the fifth council. This was clearly a very sensitive issue, because Gregory had

done no more than allude to the council, and had certainly not named it. He thereupon wrote two more letters. In one of them, he informed Theodelinda that he venerated four councils, this time without mentioning anything that might have taken place in the time of Justinian, but in the other he told Constantius that the synod held in Constantinople, 'which was called the fifth by many', did nothing contrary to the four most sacred synods.⁹⁵ It is almost embarrassing to see Gregory squirm like this. And his acceptance of one of the four councils was highly qualified, in a way that reflected traditional Roman scruples; for despite his oft-declared acceptance of the council of Constantinople that was second among them, he told the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch that the Roman church had yet to receive or accept the canons or deeds of that synod, although it did accept what that synod defined against the heretic Macedonius.⁹⁶ The letters that arrived in the papal office often contained bad news. Among the other indignities to which he was subjected, Gregory had the unpleasant experience of receiving a letter from the monk Columbanus, who was unhappy about the date on which the Roman church observed Easter. He addressed Gregory with a bluntness popes were not used to: 'So what do you say about Easter?' Worse was his attitude towards the pope whom Gregory regarded as the greatest of his predecessors, save only Peter. Columbanus referred to him with a tasteless quotation from the Bible, according to which 'perhaps a live dog is better than a dead lion (*leo*).'⁹⁷

For his part, Gregory styled himself 'servant of the servants of God'. The people who prepared his letters for the Register in which almost all of those that have come down to us are preserved eliminated the introductory protocols, so these only survive in letters preserved elsewhere. But it is clear from letters that have been transmitted as the prefaces to his books, by Bede in his *History*, or in legal sources, that it was his standard practice to refer to himself in this way.⁹⁸ The antecedents of the term are not clear, and it is impossible to tell where the idea of using it came from.⁹⁹ He had used the term of himself before becoming pope, so the notion of being a servant must have been bound up with the way Gregory regarded himself rather than having been connected to papal office.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, during the seventh century it was used by other bishops as well as popes.¹⁰¹ But the term would be adopted by later popes, such as Boniface when he wrote to king Edwin of Northumbria and his wife Æthelburh in 625, Honorius when he wrote to the bishops of Venetia and Istria in 628, and Theodore when he wrote to the patriarch of Grado in the 640s.¹⁰² Gregory's biographer of the ninth century, John the deacon, took it as a sign of his humility that in his letters he called bishops his brothers and fellow servants, the clergy of different ranks his dearly beloved sons, and laypeople lords and ladies; he would never allow himself to be called chief pontiff, universal, or lord.¹⁰³ A chorus of praise lauded Gregory for his

humility. A Spanish author of the seventh century thought of him as having been of the highest humility; an English author of the eighth century who was well acquainted with Gregory's work attributed negative comments the pope made concerning his spiritual life to his great humility; an Italian, writing a little later, believed he showed humility in describing himself as a servant in one of his letters, and a graphic story of the humility he displayed in Constantinople was known in the East.¹⁰⁴ It would be good to accept these verdicts, although the psychologically subtle discussions of pride that Gregory placed at the conclusions of the *Pastoral Rule* and the *Exposition of Job* suggest that a temptation to that particular sin was an ongoing issue in his life, just as his practice of forwarding copies of his books to important people is hard to reconcile with humility. Whereas it is possible to penetrate more deeply into Gregory's character than that of any other pope of the period, he remains hard to know.

By the time of Gregory, the church of Rome looked back over a long past, with ups and downs. His correspondence mentions a number of earlier popes, among whom the most prominent was the first, the towering figure of the apostle Peter. The next pope to be mentioned was Damasus, a controversial figure of the late fourth century who was nevertheless referred to approvingly as being of blessed memory. The third was Leo, who was usually mentioned in connection with the controversy over the Three Chapters. The most positive language was used of him: He was described as pope Leo of blessed memory, our predecessor the most holy pope Leo, and pope Leo of holy memory. The next popes to be mentioned, Hormisdas and Agapetus, who flourished in the early sixth century, were each referred to as most blessed, whereas the three popes immediately prior to Gregory are all described as our (or my) predecessor of blessed (or holy) memory. But there was another pope about whom Gregory had nothing good to say. Whether he is described as pope Vigilius, whose memory is known; the Roman bishop Vigilius; pope Vigilius; our predecessor Vigilius, bishop of the Roman see; or simply Vigilius, the correspondence of Gregory does not apply a single positive term to this pope. Nearly 50 years after his death, the pope who had held office for the longest period during the sixth century remained an embarrassment. He could so easily be mocked. The opening portions of a letter Columbanus sent to a pope early in the seventh century are full of plays on words resembling his name, that build into a crescendo: 'And so, pope, please be vigilant, be vigilant, and again I say be vigilant, because it may be that Vigilius was not properly vigilant.'¹⁰⁵ The temporising way in which Vigilius had responded to the demands of Justinian had placed the church in a situation from which it was still struggling to extricate itself; time would tell whether a firmer line would be more successful.

Notes

- 1 Pelagius's father: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 303f n.1. Constantinople: Caspar (1933): 227f. Apocrisarius: Liberatus, *brev*, 22, 23. Diplomatic experience: Procopius, *Secret History*, 27.17, 24. *Wars*, 7.16.5–17.1, 20.22–5, 21.18f. Translator: *PL* 73:351, discussed by Battle (1971): 12f, 298f, and on Benedict, pp. 208, 299. Disperses fortune: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.16.6. Defense of Three Chapters: ed. Devreese, with xviii–xx on the date, and 67.14f and 53.25–28 on Vigilius. Eutychios: *VEut*, PG 86: 2300.
- 2 Condition of Rome: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.20.19; Marcellinus comes, *chron. addit. s.a.* 547 (MGH AA 11:108). Totila entertained: Gregory, *dial*, 3.5.2. Apocalyptic feelings: Gregory, *dial*, 2.15.3 (Gregory felt that these conditions were coming to pass in his own day.)
- 3 Facundus: *Pro defensione*, ed CCSL 90A. Apostates: Facundus, *ep fid cath*, 7 (CCSL 90A: 420); Victor of Tunnuma has Pelagius ordained by apostates, *chron.* 558 (MGH AA 11: 204). Archdeacon: *LP*, 61.8, with *Acts of the Council of Constantinople* 2, p. 213.
- 4 Damasus: *CSEL* 35: 3. Blair-Dixon (2007) is excellent.
- 5 *LP*, 60.8, with Laurentian Fragment, 59f. Version: *Acts of the Council of Constantinople* 1, p. 104f.
- 6 Mareas: *ICUR* ns 8, no. 23 065, with commentary in Pietri and Pietri (1999f): 1396. Gregory's largesse: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.2.4. Pelagius's ordination: *LP*, 62.1. Nicaea: can. 4 (ed. Alberigo et al., p. 21f); Gregory I felt that three or four bishops should be present at an ordination (Bede *HE* 1.27 qu. 6, ed. Plummer p. 52); so too Isidore of Seville (*De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* 2.5.11 (CCSL 113: 60). Ritual: *Liber Diurnus*, p. 111. Ordaining the bishop of Rome had long been a prerogative of the bishop of Ostia: Augustine, *Brev. Coll.* 3.16.29 (CCSL 149A: 294); the *LP* credits pope Mark (336) with granting him the privilege of consecrating popes (35.2), and later assumes that the bishops Porto and Albano were also involved (82.7).
- 7 Vigilius ordained 81 bishops across his pontificate (*LP*, 61.9; the ordinations he conducted in Sicily in December 545, presumably his last, are not said to have included bishops, *LP*, 61.5), whereas Pelagius managed 49 during five years (*LP*, 62.4; his ordaining nine deacons is another indication of instability.)
- 8 Letter to Bishops: *MGH Ep* 3: 80f; as a Carolingian scholar observed, this would have been at the words 'una cum famulo tuo papa nostro' (Agobard of Lyons, ep. 16, *MGH Ep* 5: 226f). To Childebert: *MGH Ep* 3:71f. To the whole people: ep. 11 (ed. Gasso and Baltte).
- 9 *LP*, 62.2. Reputation of Pancras: Gregory of Tours, *glor mart*, 38.
- 10 Accession of Maximianus: *LPR*, 70. Deliyannis (2010): 210 with n. 49 discusses the title of archbishop, although it need not have been granted by Justinian, and conveniently provides illustrations of the mosaics discussed (plates VII a and b; not the best reproductions.) Trips to Constantinople: *LPR*, 74, 76. Good discussion in Markus (1997): 292–99.
- 11 With the heretic's *omnis individua et rationalis natura persona est* (*PL* 67:1196), compare Boethius's *naturae rationalis individua substantia* (*Con. Eut.* 3, ed. Moreschini p. 214). Rusticus is briefly treated in Döpp and Geerlings (2002): 615; he awaits a major study.
- 12 Cento: Chavasse, in *CCSL* 138: clvf. Letter: Schieffer (1984). Manuscripts: *CLA* 1: 26a–c p. 9f.

- 13 *Ex patre Anastasio inlustro*, LP 63.1, perhaps to be identified with the Anastasius who was *consularis* of Flaminia and Picenum during the 520s, although he then held the rank of *spectabilis* (Cassiodorus, *var.*, 5.8). Ascetic material: PL 73: 991f. Biblical works: Dekkers (1995): 951f, 1704.
- 14 LP, 63 (John); 71.1 (Boniface).
- 15 LP, 63.1–3. With *male feci Romanis* (LP, 63.3), cf 60.8, 61.4. Recalled: LPR, 90. The *Origo Gentis Langobardorum* has Narses invite the Lombards to Italy (5; MGH SRLI, 4).
- 16 John: LP, 63.5. Boniface I: LP, 44.2. Liberius: PL 8: 1391. Pelagius: LP, 65.2. Boniface V: LP, 71.1. Guidebooks: below, p. 223f; at about that time, Honorius renewed a cemetery (LP, 72.5). Eighth century: LP, 92.13; 97.79.
- 17 Unspeakable (*nefandissimi*): ep. 5.38, 7.23; cf Pelagius II, MGH Ep 3: 449.42f; they have an unspeakable song (*dial.*, 3.28.1). Authari: Gregory, ep 1.17. Key: ep. 7.23. Ariulf: Paul the deacon, *hist lang.*, 4.16.
- 18 So Richards (1979): 37 and, in a different vein, Brown (2003): 192.
- 19 Milan: Paul the deacon, *hist lang.*, 2.25; Gregory, ep. 4.2. Aquileia: Paul the deacon, *Hist Lang.*, 2.10; *chron part 1f* (MGH SRLI, 393ff). Canon law: PL 72: 683. Ravenna: Deliyannis (2010): 167f. Further, Chazelle and Cubitt (2007).
- 20 Epitaph: LP, ed. Duchesne, p. 306 n. 2. LP, 64.1; Paul the deacon, *hist lang.*, 3.11 (a heightened account). Embassies: Menander, *History*, frag. 22, 4. Cross: Talbot Rice (1959), plate 71. At about the same time Radegund had obtained from Justin relics of the Cross for her convent at Poitiers: Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis* 2.16 (MGH SRM 2: 388); Gregory of Tours, *g lor mart.*, 5; *lib hist* 9.40. Churches: Theophanes, 6064.
- 21 Evagrius, HE 4.39. Theophanes: 6066 (Benedict), 6217 (confusing popes Gregory II and III, but resuming the old practice). Donors: LP, 69.2; 78.2. Centumcellae: Pelagius I, ep. 43. Paul the deacon: *hist lang.*, 3.15, otherwise following Gregory of Tours, *lib hist.*, 6.30. Proceedings: briefly, Chadwick (2003): 57. Justin II: Evagrius, HE, 5.4.
- 22 LP, 65.
- 23 Aunarius: MGH Ep 3: 448f. Synod: CCSL 148A; 265ff. Embassy: MGH Ep 2: 440f. Childebert: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist.*, 6.42, 8.18, 9.25, 10.3. Seeks prayers: MGH Ep 3: 450.
- 24 MGH Ep 2: 442–45; the annotations do not register the allusion to John 21: 15ff at 443. 10f.
- 25 MGH Ep 2: 445–49; cf Cyprian, ed. Bévenot, esp. 4 (with xii–xv on the two versions). The text has been slightly changed; Cyprian had written ‘A primacy is given to Peter, and one church, one chair is shown.’
- 26 MGH Ep 2: 449–67; the quotation of Augustine at 456 reproduces one of a number presented at the council (*Acts of the Council of Constantinople* 1, p. 322). Apostolic see: Eugippius, CSEL 8: 1. Meyvaert (1995) discusses authorship.
- 27 Brandenburg (2005): 236–40; Caillet (2011): 159–61. Deaths: Gregory I ep. 4.30.
- 28 Selection: John the deacon, *Vita Gregorii*, 4.71; Markus (1997): 206 discusses the possible total figure. Moorhead (2005) provides an introduction to Gregory’s other works; I take the *Dialogues* to have been written by him. Liturgical prayers: Ashworth (1959). Biographies: Dekkers (1995) nos. 1722f.
- 29 Gregory’s house: Coates-Stephens (1996): 245. Tetricus: *script hist aug.*, *tyr trig.*, 25.4. Symmachus: ep. 3.12, 88; 7.18f (ed MGH AA 4). Rusticana: below, p. 125f. Gaius: *Passio S*

- 30 Felix as Gregory's *atavus*: *dial*, 4.17.1, with *hom ev*, 38.15; for the various Gordiani and Aemeliana, see the relevant entries in *PLRE*, with *LP*, 59.1 on Agapetus being the son of a Gordinanus. The family is discussed by Borgolte (1989): 59–61.
- 31 Ep. 5.53a, very interesting on Gregory's hesitation in becoming a monk.
- 32 Special dishes: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.2.6. Gordiana: *hom ev*, 38.15.
- 33 Eldest son: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1. Sister: ep. 1.5, 7.23, 11.27. Doctor: ep. 3.64, 5.46, 7.25. On the figure of the apocrisiarius, Rennie (2013): 55–64.
- 34 *Ipsa urbs urbium et totius mundi capud* [sic] *ingens*: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 5 praef.
- 35 Hovels and huts: *cod theod*, 15.1.19. Vigilius: Brandenburg (2005), 232. John III: *LP*, 63.1. Cassiodorus, *var*, 4.30 may also be relevant. Distribution of population is discussed by Reekmans (1989): 900–2.
- 36 Synod of Felix: ed. Thiel, p. 260. Synod of 499: *MGH AA* 12: 401f, 410–15 (but note a suggestion of lower figures in a forged document: *PLS* 3: 1251f.). Synod of 595: Gregory, ep. 5.57a (*MGH Ep* 1: 366f). Synod of 607: *LP*, 68.2. Eighth century: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 422 n. 13; *MGH Ep* 3: 322, 706f. Clergy numbers are discussed by Pietri (1986): 109–11.
- 37 Somewhere in the background to Gregory's activity stands a biblical narrative, 2 Sam (= 2 Kings) 24: 15–27. Rome: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1 (the only source for Pelagius dying of plague). By now the 14 regions into which Augustus had divided Rome had given way to the seven ecclesiastical regions created by pope Fabian (236–250; *LP* 21.2.) Role of Sta Maria Maggiore: Ó Carragáin (2005): 239f.
- 38 John the Deacon, *V Greg*, 1.42 (*PL*: 80f), with Gregory, app. 9.
- 39 Notice Leo's comments at *tract*. 52.5, 58.5, 67.7, 70.6, for example. Gregory's words at the beginning of *hev* 34.15 show an awareness of having wandered away from the topic.
- 40 Sermon: Gregory: *hev*, 17.15 (*CCSL* 141: 130). Augustine: *con. ep. Parm.* 3.2.16 (*PL* 43: 90); ep. 20*.2.4 (*CSEL* 88: 95). John Chrysostom mentions crowds of poor of whom written records were kept (*In I Cor.* 22.7, *PG* 61: 179). Rome: Eusebius, *HE*, 6.43. Tours: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.31.16.13. On the annual *collecta*, Leo, *tract*. 6–11, with *tract*. 9.3, 35 on the origin; the word occurs in the Vulgate for collections apparently taken up for the needy, I Cor 16:1. Generosity: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.30; the story of the angel occurs at 2.23, and the report of the book at 23.30. Sermon: *CCSL* 141: 393–411. The epitaph is reproduced in Duchesne's edition of the *LP*, p. 313f, line 7, and by Bede (*HE* 2.1, p. 79).
- 41 Simplicius: ep. 1.2 (ed. Thiel, p. 176f). Gelasius: frag. 23 (ed. Thiel, p. 497). Pelagius: ep. 14 (*PL* 69: 56). Gregory I: ep. 11.56a, and in Bede, *HE*, 1.27 (qu. 1). Gregory II: *MGH Leges* 3: 452f; note briefly *Liber Diurnus*, p. 371. Bishops appointed as visitor to a see during an interregnum were to enjoy a quarter of its income: Gregory, ep. 5.12. Other systems of dividing revenue were possible, as indicated by the council of Vaison in 511 (c 14f, *CCSL* 148: 9).
- 42 Rome: Eusebius, *HE*, 6.43. Carthage: Victor of Vita, *hist pers*, 3.34. Ravenna: *LPR*, 60. Great Church: Justinian, *nov*, 3.1.
- 43 Capua: Gregory, ep. 3.34, 5.13f, 27. Catania: ep. 8.7, with Jones (1964): 908, with n. 8. Ravenna: *LPR*, 117. Simplicius: ed. Thiel, p. 176.
- 44 Marazzi (1998) and Moreau (2006) are excellent. Constantine: *LP*, 34. Senatorial families:

- Jones (1964): 554f. Benefit of souls: Leo, ep. 17. Gelasius: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.2.4. Population estimate: Sessa (2012): 157.
- 45 Rectors number 23: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.53. Shipwreck: Gregory, ep. 1.42. Vigilius: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.15.9–15. 23 rectors: Ravenna: *LPR*, 111 with 60.
- 46 Gregory, ep. 2.7, 32f, 45; 5.36; 9.44.
- 47 Cities overthrown: *Hom Ez*, 1.9.9. (SC 321: 342). Enemy swords: 1.11.26 (484). Let no-one criticise: 2.10.24 (530).
- 48 Story: *auct havn extr*, 17 (*MGH AA* 9: 339). Peace: Gregory, ep. 9.66.
- 49 Gelasius: Ep. 14.26 (ed. Thiel, p. 376–78). Otranto (1982) implausibly takes this as evidence for bishops ordaining women.
- 50 *LP*, 47.5.
- 51 *ICUR ns* 2, no. 1477, with Russo (1979f) on the date. The fresco is reproduced in Pani Ermini (2000): 69.
- 52 Jerome: *PL* 26: 601. *LP*, 43.1 (Zosimus); 39.6 (Damasus, with *coll avel* 1.5 on his election); *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 253 n. 2 (Felix); p. 386 n. 1 (John VII); 91.10 (Gregory II). On Theodora; Goodson (2010): 166f.
- 53 Portraits: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 4.83f; reproduction in Pani Ermini (2000): 182. Meals: John the deacon, 1.9. Pateria: Gregory, ep. 1.37; the *pueri* could, however, have been slaves. We shall return to this later.
- 54 *Miraculum sancti Anastasii*.
- 55 Council: *PL* 67: 343, c 1f, with c 14f on Epiphania; on the words *presbytera* and *diacona*, Conte (1984): 193f. Priest and *presbitera*: Gregory, *dial.* 4.12, with council of Auxerre (561–605), c 21 (*CCSL* 148A: 268; the following canon prohibits the widow of a priest, deacon, or subdeacon from remarrying). *Episcopia*: council of Tours (567), c 14 (13; *CCSL* 148A: 181).
- 56 Ambrose: *V Amb* 10.1 (*SAEMO* 24/2: 38). Generous women: Ammianus Marcellinus, 27.3.14. 370: *Cod theod* 16.2.20. Earpick: *Coll avel* p. 4.5; the word *auriscalpius* is otherwise unknown, and may have been invented with the pope in mind. 390: *cod theod* 16.2.27f. 455: Marc. nov. 5 in *cod theod*), with *cod iust*, 1.2.13. Celestine: ep. 23.6 (*PL* 50: 544). Felix and Padusa: Dessau 1, no 1293. Albinus and Glaphyra: *LP*, 53.10. Theodora: *Scriptores* (ed. Preger), p. 248 (no. 93). Widowed queen: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 9.26. ‘Vierges et veuves a la rescousse’ is the title of a chapter in Simonnot (2005).
- 57 Brubaker (1997): 53.
- 58 *MGH AA* 12: 410–15.
- 59 Vestina: *LP*, 42.3. Lucina: *LP*, 31.4. Praxides: *LP*, 11.4. Anastasia: *PLRE* 2: 76 (Anastasia 1). Crescentius: *LP*, cxxvif. Aemiliana: *PLRE* 2: 15.
- 60 Galla’s career: Gregory, *dial.* 4.14. Gelasius: frag. 38 (ed. Thiel, p. 503f). Letter: Fulgentius of Ruspe, ep. 2 (*CCSL* 91). Churches: *Chronicon di Benedetto*, p. 25f.
- 61 Time of Leo: *LP*, 98.77, 90, where it is described as being in a state of decay owing to its age. Time of Hadrian: *LP*, 97.53 (a monastery dedicated to S Andrew is similarly described at 98. 91.) Barbara: Gregory, ep. 11.59; this interpretation relies on reading *maritis* for *meritis* at *MGH Ep* 3: 345.27, as does Norberg, *CCSL* 140: 966.18. Women decide: e.g. Gregory I, ep. 9.333 (also interesting for what was needed to finance a convent.) Dedications to Stephen:

- 62 Rusticiana: Gregory, ep 8.22, 13.26, 11.26. Earlier Rusticiana: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.20.27. Poem: Cameron (1979a). Icon: Castelfranchi (1995), Cocchini (2001), on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Anna: LP, 93.26
- 63 Lupicina: Procopius, *Secret History*, 6.17, 9.49. Burial: Grierson (1962): 45. *Greek Anthology*, 1.12, with Janin (1969): 124f.
- 64 Inscription: *Greek Anthology*, 1.10, a boast perhaps responded to by Romanos Melodos, comparing Justinian's Hagia Sophia to Solomon's temple: *kont.* 54.21 (*SChr* 283: 492–94); unfortunately the evidence for Justinian's exclaiming 'Solomon, I have outdone you!' on entering the newly completed Hagia Sophia is very weak. Rivalry between Juliana and Justinian is suggested by Gregory of Tours, *glor mart*, 91.
- 65 Communion: Theodore lector, *HE*, 504; Theophanes, 6005. Sabas: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*, 53, 69 (in *Lives of the Monks*).
- 66 Correspondence: *coll avel*, 62, 164, 179, 198. Constantine: *Greek Anthology*, 1.10.73. Prosper: *MGH AA* 9: 452. John Malalas: 317.
- 67 Gregory, ep. 5. 53a, 10.16, 12.6, with 5.51 on Marinianus.
- 68 Pastoral Care: *SChr* 381: 124–26. Marinianus: *LPR*, 99. Bishop of Luni: Gregory, ep. 5.17. Columbanus: *MGH Ep* 3: 159. Maurice and Anastasius: Gregory, ep. 12.6.
- 69 Ezekiel: *SChr* 327: 46–48. Secundinus: ep. 9.147. Alfred: *Alfred the Great*, p. 126. Fragment: Babcock (2000). Letters: Ildephonsus, *vir ill*, 1 (*PL* 69: 199).
- 70 Lilla (2001): 205–8; the passage is *hev* 39.2.
- 71 Leander: Gregory, ep. 5.53a. Theodosius 'born in the purple': John of Ephesus, *HE*, *pars tertia*, 5.14 (*CSCO Scriptores Syri, series tertia* 3: 119f). Gregory his godfather: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1; he was born in either 583 or 585 (*PLRE* 3: 1293). Peter and Paul: Gregory, ep. 13.1.
- 72 Restrictions: ep. 3.61, 8.10; 9.156 on not being tricked. Difficulties with Lombards: 5.36.
- 73 The translation is that of Martyn; cf *mor*, 35.20.49, trans. Moorhead (2005): 155–57.
- 74 John the deacon, *V Greg*, 4.16.
- 75 Gregory, ep. 13.1 (image), 13.34f (letters to Phocas and Leontia), with John the deacon, *V Greg*, 4.20; on the chapels, Augenti (1996): 41f. In 453 *iconica* of the new emperor Marcian had arrived in Rome: *Continuatio codicis Reichenauensis* 21 (*MGH AA* 9: 490); in 581 the Merovingian king Chilperic received a painted *iconica* of Tiberius (Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 6.2. Traditional procedure: Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *Books*, Moffatt and Tall, 393–96. Rossano Gospels: Loerke (1961). *Cod. theod* 15.4 of 425 urges restraint in the cult of images.
- 76 *Ep.* 5.37; Gregory assumed the bishop of Antioch would know how many great heretics and heresiarchs had come out of Constantinople (ep. 7.24).
- 77 The apparent propensity of easterners for falling into heresy owed something to long-standing differences in the intellectual life of the East and West (see above, p. 1). Translation: Turner, ed *Monumenta*, p. 91; cf p. 37. Controversy with Eutychios: Gregory, *mor*, 14.56.72–4 (*CCSL* 143A: 743–45); Eustratios, *V Eut*, 89 (*PG* 865: 2373–78).
- 78 'Ecumenical': Lampe (1961+), 'οικουμενικός 3; Justinian, *nov.* 3, 5, 6, 7; however, the Latin

version only gives 'archbishop' at 6 and 7.

79 Gregory, ep. 1.4; 3.52; 5.37, 39, 41; 8.29.

80 This is already the case in the laws of Justinian, where *οικουμενικός πατριάρχης* is rendered 'universalis patriarch'... as it is in the translation of the Greek original of the proceedings of the Lateran council of 649: *ACO* 2nd ser 1: 168.6, 169.6. The Greek term 'ecumenical council' is regularly translated into Latin *universalis synodus* (e.g. at Chalcedon: Alberigo et al., p. 133). Only bishop: ep. 5.39 (*MGH Ep* 1: 327. 23–25). Demacopoulos (2009) is very helpful.

81 Kyriakos: ep. 13.43. Zacharias: *PL* 77: 147C.

82 References via *MGH Ep* 2: 589f (*serenitas*), 543 (*excellencia*), 550 (*gloriosus*). Æthelberht: cf Bede, *HE*, 1.32, with Gregory, ep. 11.37.

83 Childehert: ep. 6.6, cf. e.g. 1.29, f; the recipients of 12.2 do not seem to have been distinguished. Constantina: ep. 4.30. Theoctista: ep. 7.23.

84 Association: Dumézil (2005): 155f. Ambrose: *exp luc*, 10.14. Leo: *tract.* 70.5; while Leo attributes this view to others, nothing suggests that he would have been uncomfortable with it. Augustine: ep. 199.46 (*PL* 33: 922).

85 Bede, *HE*, 2.1; John the deacon, *Vita Gregorii*, 1.21–24. Two of the stories attribute puns to Gregory. Bede has him associate Angles with angels, their being from the region of Deiri with their being plucked from wrath (*de ira*), and the name of their king, Ælle, with alleluia, while the author of the Whitby Life has him interpret his seeing locusts as a command to stay in his place (*sta in loco*; *Earliest Life*, 10). Perhaps the English mission brought out a kind of wit in Gregory, who elsewhere commented that the Angles lived in an angle of the world, ep. 8.29 (*MGH Ep* 2: 30.27f).

86 Bede: *HE*, 2.1. (p. 80f). Candidus: Gregory, ep. 6.10. Team of missionaries: *ibid*, 6.51. Augustine as *praepositus*: ep. 6.53 (also in Bede, *HE*, 1.23).

87 Bede, *HE* 1.25f. Gregory had been told that the English 'earnestly desired to be converted' (ep. 6.51), but it does not follow from this that they rather than Gregory were responsible for the process of Christianisation, as suggested by Wood (1994: 9).

88 10,000: Gregory, ep 8.29, with Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 2.31 on Clovis. Bishop and queries: Bede, *HE*, 1.27 (incorrectly having Augustine made an archbishop); cf John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.36, where Augustine is simply made a bishop.

89 Organisation: Gregory, ep. 11.39, with important comments by Flechner (2012): 58–62.

90 The church: *hom ez*, 1.8.10, 2.1.7. Peter: *mor*, 18.54.91. Paul: *mor*, 18.7.13, 26.39, 54.91. Arles: *CCSL* 148, where the material is most easily accessed via the entries for Hibernius and Restitutus in the index of names (237, 240).

91 Ravenna: *LPR*, 40, 70, 110, 113; see too above p. 75 for the case of Anthimus. Gregory and John: Gregory, ep. 3.54, 3.66, 5.11, 5.15. 6.31, 9.168 (much summarised in the account above.) Autun: Gregory, ep. 8.4.

92 *Coleccion Canonica*, pp. 49–148, with a following homily by Leander; John of Biclaro, *MGH AA* 11: 219.

93 Gregory, ep. 5.53a; 9.227a, 228.

94 Ep. 1.24. In Alexandria, the patriarch John the Almoner required of priests returning to the Orthodox faith adherence to four ecumenical councils (*Life*, 5, trans. Baynes and Dawes p.

- 95 Letters to Theodelinda: ep. 4.4, 33; 5.52 is similar. Letters to Constantius: ep. 4.2, 37.
- 96 Ep. 7.31 (*MGH Ep* 1: 479).
- 97 Ep. 1, ed. *MGH Ep* 3: 156f; the quotation is from Eccl. 9:4. The expressions of humility contained in the letter were not necessarily meant to be taken at face value.
- 98 Dedicatory letters: ep. 4.17a, 5.53a, 12.16a. In Bede: *HE*, 1.23f, 28–30. Others: Gregory, ep. 1.14a, (quoted when confirmed by pope Gregory IX); 1.39a (in a collection of canons).
- 99 Gregory can hardly have had the biblical application of the term to Canaan in mind (Gen 9: 25); Augustine, *conf*, 9.9.22 may be relevant.
- 100 Gregory describes himself in 587 as *servus servorum Dei* (*MGH Ep* 2, app. 1, p. 437.16, addressed to the monastery of St Andrew).
- 101 Bishop Maurus of Ravenna, writing to pope Martin (*ACO* 4/2: 23.32); bishop Taio of Saragossa, writing to bishop Eugenius of Toledo (*ep.* 4, *MGH AA* 14: 287). A charter in which Columban is made to use the term of himself (*PL* 80: 322) is a forgery.
- 102 Boniface: Bede, *HE*, 2.10f. Honorius and Theodore: *MGH Ep* 3: 695, 697.
- 103 *V Greg*, 4.58. But popes a century earlier had addressed bishops as ‘most dearly beloved brother’, warmer terminology than that employed by Gregory.
- 104 Isidore of Seville, *vir ill*, 27; Bede, *HE*, 2.1; Paul the deacon, *HL* 4.29, referring to Gregory, ep. 5.6; John Moschus, *prat spir*, 151.
- 105 Gregory’s letters: references to earlier popes can be traced through the index of persons and places at the end of *MGH Ep* 2. Columban: *MGH Ep* 3: 171.39f.

Gregory the Great would have been a hard act to follow, but pope **Sabinianus (13 September 604–22 February 606)** did not make the attempt. In 593 Gregory had sent him as his legate to Constantinople, equipped with letters of introduction to influential people.¹ But it was while Sabinianus was seeing to the interests of the Roman church in the royal city that the controversy over the claim of the patriarch of Constantinople to be the ecumenical patriarch became heated, and to judge by the one surviving letter that Gregory, an old hand at seeing to papal interests in the East, sent to him while he was there, the pope was highly critical of the way he handled the issue. His return to Rome in the summer of 597 bearing messages and gifts from people in the East seems to have marked the end of his spell in the royal city, and whatever issues Gregory had with him must have been complicated by the failure of his assistant to accompany him back to the city; later in the year Gregory wrote to the bishop of Jerusalem, where he had fled, asking that he be returned to Rome.² Not surprisingly, on becoming pope Sabinianus defiantly turned his back on Gregory's legacy. The epitaph placed by his tomb made the point in a number of ways. It describes him as a holy man who had not assumed the crown by sudden praise but had been worthy of advancing step-by-step, language that invited a comparison with Gregory, who, after pope Pelagius had taken him under his wing, had been catapulted into high office rather than advancing through the ranks of the clergy, and who, if we are to believe a rumour that the entire people chose him as pope, may have owed his elevation to sudden praise. Another point of contrast with Gregory was suggested by the epitaph's portrayal of Sabinianus as someone who removed vice by speaking in a kindly fashion and dealt with the guilty not as a judge but as a doctor, and when it pointed out that in the time of Sabinianus the horror of war disturbed no-one and the savage wrath of a wound administered by an angel was not experienced, it invited comparison with the horrors visited on Rome by king Agilulf while Gregory had been pope. The last comparison would have been unfair, for whereas peace was indeed made with the Lombards soon after Sabinianus became pope it had been negotiated not by him but by the exarch

Smaragdus, who paid Agilulf a consideration of 12,000 solidi. Nevertheless, given that Agilulf had described himself, on a crown he donated to John the Baptist, as ‘King of all Italy’, his coming to terms must have been a relief.³

Sabinianus also differed from Gregory in his place of origin, for whereas his predecessor had grown up and come to adulthood in a prosperous part of Rome, Sabinianus was from Blera, a small hill town some 50 km northwest of the city. There were long-term fluctuations in the places where popes had originated, for whereas most of the popes of the fourth century had been born in Rome, a clear majority of those during the following 150 years were from elsewhere. The pattern was broken during the period from Vigilius to Gregory, during which every pope was born in Rome, perhaps a sign of difficult conditions created by the Gothic war and the coming of the Lombards. However, thereafter it resumed, and only three of the 10 popes who entered office during the first half of the seventh century had begun their lives in the city. Some of them had come from towns of mind-boggling obscurity. Pope Hormisdas, for example, had been born in Frosinone, a town too small to have a bishop that long had a reputation for being a backwater, Plautus having included it in a list of towns he considered barbarous, whereas Juvenal knew of it as a place where housing was cheap.⁴ For some popes the *Liber Pontificalis* provides only the region in which a pope was born; perhaps these popes had been so successful in leaving their origins behind that no-one could remember the names of the towns in which they had been born. Cities have traditionally been magnets for able and ambitious people, and even in its reduced circumstances during late antiquity Rome remained attractive, so it is easy to imagine young men moving there and settling on a career within its clergy. Such a pattern of movement out of the provinces is reminiscent of the lives of some of the senior members of the civil service we have encountered. The family of Cassiodorus was based in Bruttium and that of Arator in Liguria, whereas the decision of the children of Liberius to bury him together with his wife at Rimini suggests that they came from there.⁵ These men had ended up in Ravenna rather than Rome, but it may be that within the church of Rome, no less than the state, men from solid provincial families were overrepresented towards the top of its administration.

Despite his looming so large in papal history, Gregory had been unpopular among his clergy, who were happy to have as his successor a man he had not got on with and who could be represented as steering the church in a different direction. Indeed, Sabinianus may have been campaigning to become pope while Gregory was still alive. Not long after he died his own successor, Boniface III, held a council in St Peter’s basilica at which he decreed, under pain of anathema, that no-one was to speak or form factions while the pope or the bishop of a city was alive. Only on the third day after he had been buried

were the clergy and sons of the church to come together for an election, at which everyone was to be free to vote for whomever he wanted. Whereas the applicability of the decree to churches outside Rome suggests that it may have been issued in response to a problem found elsewhere as well, it was the first time the issue had been dealt with in the city since the 530s, and, following as it did so quickly after the death of Sabinianus, it suggests that that pope had been campaigning for office during Gregory's lifetime, an activity that may have destabilised the conduct of business by his predecessor.⁶

But the issues that divided Sabinianus from Gregory were also bound up with the structures of the church. Within Rome a good deal of power lay in the hands of the deacons, and Gregory's relations with this group had been difficult. One year after he became pope he found it necessary to depose the archdeacon Laurence, because of his pride and deeds that were so evil that Gregory felt they were best left unspoken. As all the clergy looked on, Gregory compounded the humiliation of Laurence, whose rank would have made him a likely successor to Pelagius II, by installing another man in the post. Several years later he issued a decree that deacons were no longer to sing during the liturgy. The reform may seem trivial, but Gregory justified it by claiming that some people had been chosen as singers and then made deacons because of their voices, despite their living in ways that offended God. At any time there were only seven deacons in the Roman church, so some of them must have taken this as pointed criticism of their personal lives. Prior to becoming pope Sabinianus had been a deacon, and we may not be going too far to see him as representing a group who had come to harbour ill will towards Gregory. An elliptical statement in the *Liber Pontificalis* that Sabinianus filled the church with clergy reflects his support of a group who may have felt that Gregory had slighted them. Sabinianus is not recorded as having ordained any priests or deacons for the Roman church, although he did ordain 26 bishops for other churches, so his filling the church with clergy cannot have been a matter of increasing their number. Gregory is known to have transferred some tasks from clergy to monks, as had occurred when an awkward situation arose at the church of S Pancras, one with which Gregory was familiar, for not long after becoming bishop he had preached there on the feast of its patron saint. People who went there on Sunday found no priests to say mass, and went home grumbling. Gregory acted decisively, removing the lazy priests to whom the church had been entrusted and installing a community of monks nearby. They would be responsible for maintaining the round of services at fixed times before the body of the saint, and mass would be celebrated by a priest who lived among them. A reversal of Gregory's policy of favouring monks at the expense of the regular clergy probably led Sabinianus to be thought of as filling the church with clergy.⁷

Sabinianus also responded to a crisis in a way that invited comparison with the policies of Gregory. People in late antiquity were no strangers to hunger, and each generation in Rome was likely to experience at least one shortage of food. It could have been caused by war, whether because local supplies had been interrupted, as was the case when Vitigis besieged Rome during the pontificate of Silverius and Totila did the same in that of Vigilius, or because of more general reasons, as when Lombards were spreading over Italy in the time of Benedict I. Sometimes a pope had to respond to a sterile year, as did Boniface II, whereas sometimes famine was part of a complex of issues, such as the pestilence that was accompanied by floods when Boniface IV was pope. Whatever its cause, it lay in the power of the pope to help those who were hungry. While the Ostrogoths held power in Italy, the provisioning of Rome was the responsibility of a state official, the prefect of the provisions. According to the standard letter of appointment drafted by Cassiodorus that was sent to someone assuming the office, if he discharged it well, Rome would praise him, and pope Gelasius had similarly been aware that generosity towards the needy was a way of gaining a good reputation. But no prefect of the provisions is known to have held office after the 530s, and by then bishops were showing competence at such tasks. This must be why the Ostrogothic government entrusted to bishop Datius of Milan, rather than its own officials, the responsibility of selling grain from its warehouses when food was short in towns near the city where he was bishop during the late 530s; the calibre of many of the men who were becoming bishops, together with the teaching of the religion they espoused concerning charity, made it natural for them to become involved in such undertakings at a period when the secular authorities were coming to withdraw from various activities, although overlapping areas of responsibility were still causing tension between the officers of the church and the state at the end of the sixth century. And what was true of bishops in general was particularly true of those of Rome. Having at their disposal the enormous revenues from the estates the church owned, they were well placed to assist in difficult times. Gregory I was long remembered for the generosity with which he responded to people in need, and his deeds can be placed against reports of Gelasius freeing the city of Rome from the danger of hunger and Boniface II helping clergy who were threatened with this. But such ability generated expectations, and these could be thwarted, so that blame attached to Vigilius, who seems to have failed to deal with the difficult conditions caused by the Gothic war in a manner the people hoped for. As he was leaving Rome on his involuntary trip to Constantinople a crowd threw their cooking pots at him, shouting that he was to take his hunger with him.⁸

The famine that broke out in the time of Sabinianus was the result of natural causes, a cold winter that killed the vines, and mice and blight that damaged

the crops. A few years later the authorities in Constantinople responded to a crisis by first imposing a charge on bread that had formerly been supplied free, and then ceasing to provide it at all. For his part, Sabinianus began to sell grain from the storehouses maintained by the church, charging one solidus for 30 modii. The price was reasonable by commercial standards, and the *Liber Pontificalis* need not have intended to suggest meanness on his part by specifying it; indeed, when the author of the epitaph placed near his tomb described him as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, he meant to praise him. Any grievance that the people had would not have been the price that Sabinianus was charging, but that he was selling something that they felt should have been distributed for nothing. Centuries later, it was believed that when the famine struck people were angry that Gregory had run down the resources of the church, and began burning his books. This report must stand in some relation to another story that his successor made the contents of the granaries of the church available to people purchasing grain, but not to the people Gregory had ordered were to be fed without payment from the resources of the church. When the people began to cry out, beseeching the pope not to let them perish, Sabinianus was said to have replied that, whereas Gregory had given everyone food with a view to winning praise from the people, he was unable to feed them all. The snide accusation that Gregory made a show of generosity in order to win praise recalls Cassiodorus's observation that a prefect of the provisions could expect to be praised if he did his job properly, and is a reminder that charity could have a political dimension. Thereafter, the story continues, Gregory appeared to his successor, who is tactfully left unnamed throughout the narrative, in a number of visions, telling him to change his ways. But he proved obdurate, and when Gregory appeared to him for the last time he struck him on the head with such force that he died shortly afterwards. Whatever may have caused the death of Sabinianus, the arrangements that were made for his funeral were unusual. The route across Rome from the papal quarters in the Lateran complex to S Peter's, where it was by now assumed that popes would be buried, was straightforward, if somewhat long. But the body of the dead pope was taken out of the city by the gate of St John, near the Lateran in its southeastern sector, from where it was conveyed outside the walls as far as the Milvian Bridge, a good way to the north of the city, and thence to S Peter's. The extraordinarily circuitous nature of this route suggests that those organising the funeral procession feared that there would be demonstrations of discontent had it passed through the city.⁹

One of the surprises of the history of the Roman church in the early seventh century is to discover how badly Gregory I was thought of by many of the clergy who served under him, and how both those who looked with favour on

his successor and those who found him wanting defined him in terms of Gregory. But the different traditions represented by Gregory and Sabinianus were both to live on, and conflicting understandings of the mission of the church were at least as important as personal rivalries in generating tensions among the clergy of Rome that would be very obvious the following period.

Boniface III (19 February–12 November 607), a native of Rome whose father had been a tax collector, entered office after a vacancy of just under a year, and held it for less than that period.¹⁰ The length of the vacancy is surprising, and hard to account for. Boniface's activities before he became pope are better known than his achievements when in office. For Boniface, no less than Sabinianus, had been one of the clergy who carried out tasks on behalf of Gregory, although unlike Sabinianus he did so in ways that Gregory appreciated, and his doings prior to becoming pope cast important light on some of the concerns of the church at this time.

Boniface may have been the person of that name who held the office of defender when he carried a letter from Gregory I to a former patriarch of Antioch living in exile in Constantinople and was charged with handing something else over to him in secrecy; he is certainly to be identified with the Boniface whom Gregory appointed to a new office, that of first defender, in 598. The post of defender within the church was modelled on a Roman secular office that had been known since the fourth century, that of defender of the city, one of whose duties was to protect the townspeople from high prices. The defenders employed by the church played important roles, for it was one of them who brought a complaint from Rome to the Ostrogothic court at Ravenna in 532 concerning the bribery that had accompanied the election of a new pope, and statements describing their office indicate that they were expected to work hard in the interests of the church, as well as defend the poor. Pope Pelagius I believed that a monk was not suited to being a defender, for the post involved dealing with things he obscurely described as legal affairs, proceedings, pieces of judicial business, public disputes, the regulations of the church, and the exigencies of people asking for things. A sense of their manifold activities is given by the numerous references to them in the correspondence of Gregory I, where they can be seen escorting errant bishops to Rome and keeping an eye on proceedings when a bishop, who had borrowed money to redeem captives, sold church vessels to settle his debt. Sometimes, however, they co-operated with local bishops, as when the former fiancé of a woman who had become a nun refused to relinquish some of her property that had come into his possession, and when the daughter of a high-ranking officer, utterly depraved as it was thought, laid aside the garb of a nun and resumed wearing secular clothing; the offender was to be placed in a monastery and kept under strict guard. Sometimes they had to deal with

matters of more general concern. When reports reached Rome that a number of bishops in Sicily were living with women, claiming that their female companions gave them comfort, a team of four defenders, two subdeacons, two notaries, and six people described as patrons was sent from Rome to deal with the problem. Another defender was sent to Spain, with authority to pronounce judgment concerning two bishops who claimed they had been wrongfully deposed. Their cases were complicated, involving the reliability of those who had made accusations against them, the status of the bishops who had been ordained to replace them, and that of the bishops who had carried out these ordinations. Moreover, the secular arm had been involved in the deposition, and the defender sent to sort matters out left Rome armed with quotations from the laws of the state that bore on the case in the form that Justinian had issued them. Whereas the name 'defender' suggests passivity, the activities of those who held the office provided them with opportunities of aggressive behaviour that could be profitable, so there was a need to guard against unscrupulous people who pretended to be defenders. They were men of parts who could die in debt, leaving children who needed to be provided for. When he appointed Boniface to be their chief, Gregory organised the defenders into a college under a head, so that just as the notaries served under a 'first of the notaries', Boniface would be the first among the defenders. Despite his reluctance to undertake administration, Gregory was continually on the lookout for ways in which procedures could be improved, and that a person who had discharged the job of defender could become pope indicates how important the skills that it involved had become for the church. The ties that had come to bind the church to the surrounding world created issues that needed constant attention by competent people.¹¹

Boniface was to receive further preferment before he became pope. Two months after he had written to the emperor Phocas in May 603 congratulating him on his coming to power Gregory despatched the former defender, now promoted to the rank of deacon, to act as his representative in Constantinople, accompanied by letters of introduction to Phocas and other notables. His appointment seems to have marked a reopening of diplomatic relations between pope and emperor after a period of coolness, which Gregory implausibly explained by his having been unable to induce anyone to accept the post. Whereas Sabinianus had been a disappointment, Gregory felt he could trust Boniface to master highly complicated issues and use his political acumen to bring about good outcomes.¹² Moreover, Gregory may have envisaged Boniface subsequently holding a still more senior office. He had himself represented the Roman church in Constantinople and succeeded the pope who had appointed him, and a spell in the royal city had become a desirable item in the curriculum vitae of aspirants for papal office, for Felix IV,

Vigilius, and Pelagius I, no less than the Dioscorus who was elected pope on the same day as Boniface II, and Sabinianus himself, had all been active there, and each of them had been a deacon at the time when he became pope, just as Boniface was. Boniface's accession to papal office can therefore have surprised no-one, and good relations he had cultivated with Phocas while in Constantinople may have lain behind a declaration he obtained from the emperor according to which the apostolic see of blessed Peter the apostle was to be the head of all churches, something that had become necessary because the church of Constantinople had been writing that it was the first of all churches. Presumably Boniface intended this as a shot in the controversy about the title of ecumenical patriarch, in which he will have taken the line so vehemently argued for by Gregory, and his gaining this result, no less than the implication that the ruling of an emperor on such a matter was significant, points to harmony between pope and emperor.¹³

The son of a doctor in a country town, **Boniface IV (25 August 608– 8 May 615)** had been another trusted collaborator of Gregory. His epitaph describes him as having always followed the teachings and examples of this teacher in his life, his work, and the way he did things; no less than that of Sabinianus, but in a reverse manner, the epitaph of Boniface defined him with reference to Gregory. One of the ways in which he followed the example of Gregory was in turning his house into a monastery. The endowment of monasteries by wealthy people, pious laity as well as clergy, was common in the period. Belisarius had established one after he took Rome, Cassiodorus established a monastery on his estates in the south of Italy, and the remains of a monastery founded during the sixth century by another high-ranking civil servant, Liberius, have been discovered. We know of popes who founded monasteries during the fifth century, but wealthy members of the clergy could go further and turn their own homes into monasteries, as did John, a priest of the Roman church who constructed a chapel in his house near the baths of Agrippa, not far from the Pantheon, and provided in his will for monks to be settled there. Monasticism could have a familial aspect, for not only did Gregory turn his large home into a monastery, but three of his aunts adopted a religious life in their home. Gregory's deed, and presumably that of Boniface, was a gesture from a wealthy person with strong spiritual convictions; their example would be followed some years later by pope Honorius.¹⁴

But Boniface established something far more significant than a monastery. One of the most impressive buildings of ancient Rome still standing is the temple, originally erected by Agrippa just before the time of Christ but in its present form dating from the reign of Hadrian, that had become known as the Pantheon. We owe its excellent preservation to a take-over operation mounted by Boniface. Having obtained from the complaisant emperor Phocas the

permission required to alienate a building owned by the state, in 613 he turned it into a church.¹⁵ Phocas had already displayed friendship towards the Roman church in the days of Boniface III, and a golden statue of him atop a column that was erected in his honour by the exarch Smaragdus in 608, the last commemorative monument to be placed in the Roman forum, suggests that he was well regarded in the city. The Pantheon was remote from the great basilicas, and in turning it into a church Boniface continued the visible push of Christianity into the central parts of the city. He may have seen himself as neutralising a site that had been under the control of hostile supernatural beings. Disturbing events had taken place in Rome not long before, when Gregory I performed a ceremony of dedication in the church in which the general Ricimer had installed a mosaic during the fifth century, so turning a building that had been used for worship by anti-Nicenes, a cave of heretical depravity in Gregory's opinion, into a place of Catholic worship. Relics of SS Sebastian and Agatha were duly placed there, and the name by which the church is now known, Sant' Agata dei Goti, preserves the names of the second of these saints and of the group who had in earlier times formed its congregation. While mass was being celebrated, a pig that could be felt running between people's legs but not seen scampered through the church and out the door. Gregory believed that its departure had not been voluntary, and deduced that something unclean had been dwelling in the place; he must have had in mind the story of Jesus compelling demons to enter a herd of pigs (Luke 8: 30–3). Later, loud noises were heard coming from the church at night. But a few days afterwards a sweet-smelling cloud covered it, and on the following day lamps were miraculously lit, from which it could be deduced that the place had passed from darkness to light. Peter the deacon, to whom Gregory represents himself as telling the story about the pig, was astonished at such stupendous miracles, and we are expected to take the occurrence very seriously. Perhaps it had been the relics that had forced the unclean thing to depart. Relics of S Sebastian had recently shown their power in Tuscany, when a recently married woman attended a service at a chapel which was dedicated to him, having had sex the night before. As the relics of the martyr were brought in, she was seized by an evil spirit. An author of the eighth century who saw Boniface's achievement in the Pantheon in terms of his getting rid of all the filth that had been there and driving out a multitude of demons interpreted the incident in the same way as Gregory did the incident in the church. Boniface placed there a mosaic and icons that could still be seen in the late eighth century.¹⁶

Whatever his motive was in occupying the Pantheon, Boniface was acting in a way that would have pleased Gregory. Writing to king Æthelberht of Kent in 601, Gregory had encouraged him to pursue those who worshipped idols and

to overthrow the temples they had built, but a few weeks later he instructed abbot Mellitus to tell Augustine, the leader of the band of preachers, that, having thought about the matter for a long time, he had decided that they were not to destroy the temples housing idols but only the idols. When this had been done they were to sprinkle the temples with holy water, construct altars, and place relics there, so converting the temples from the worship of demons to the service of the true God. In taking over the Pantheon, Boniface was implementing a policy Gregory had come to see as appropriate for a remote area in the centre of Rome itself. The new church had a twofold dedication, S Mary Ever-Virgin and All the Martyrs. Its second part was certainly appropriate, for the Greek word 'Pantheon' refers to all the gods, and whereas we may hesitate to see the martyrs as having inherited the functions of the gods, taken in their totality they constituted a group fittingly displaced by all the Christian martyrs. And the former part of its dedication was in keeping with the spirit of the times.¹⁷

The number of churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary had failed to do justice to her prominence in theology and cult. The imbalance was linked to a widespread practice for churches to be dedicated to the martyrs near whose bodies they had been erected or whose relics they contained, for the dedication of churches to Mary was impeded by a conviction, steadily becoming more explicit and apparently corroborated by a lack of bodily remains, that when she died her body had been taken into heaven. The belief was reflected in a much later story that the emperor Marcian had asked the bishop of Jerusalem to send the body of Mary to Constantinople so he could place it in a church that had been erected in her honor in the area known as Blachernai, just outside the walls of the city, only to be told that when the apostles entered her tomb three days after she died they had found it empty. As time passed the absence of churches dedicated to her came to be felt; an English bishop who had been seriously ill was reminded by S Michael that, despite the successful prayers the Virgin had offered on his behalf, he had not dedicated a single church to her.¹⁸ But one of the earliest churches erected in honour of the Virgin anywhere was the basilica of Sta Maria Maggiore that pope Sixtus had built, and its dedication may have been connected with the recent declaration of the council of Ephesos that Mary was 'Theotokos', or God-bearer, in which case it would have been another example of the responsiveness of the church of Rome to contemporary developments in the broader Christian world. Perched on the Esquiline Hill, Sta Maria Maggiore occupied a prominent position, and it was both central and large, so that popes who publicly burned the books of the Manichaeans could do so in front of its doors as well as those of the cathedral, and it was sensible for Gregory I to arrange for the processions he organised in response to the plague to converge there. The dedication of the basilica to the

Virgin preceded the erection of the church in Blachernai, in the early 450s, whereas it was only at about the time of bishop Ecclesius (522–532) that a church, described as being wonderfully large, was dedicated to Mary in Ravenna, and Justinian could be described as seeing to the erection of churches dedicated to her in Constantinople and all the parts of his Empire. Another indication of the developing cult of the Virgin was a feeling that the original dedication of Sta Maria Maggiore was inadequate. Sixtus is simply described as building a church for S Mary, which falls a long way short of the title it bore in the middle of the seventh century, when it was known as the church of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary at the Stable, the final term appropriate in the light of the practice of popes to celebrate mass there on Christmas Eve. Some manuscripts of the *Liber Pontificalis* betray uneasiness as to Sta Maria Maggiore having been originally dedicated simply to S Mary, and add the phrase ‘the Mother of God’, just as the phrase ‘the glorious Mother of God’ is added by some to the dedication of the former Pantheon.¹⁹

Accounts of the history of the cult of Mary can give the impression that it developed in the east and was imitated in Rome, but the chronology of the churches dedicated to her suggests that it was strong in Rome at a relatively early date, and that it became steadily more powerful there. The church now known as Sta Maria in Trastevere had been founded in the fourth century, from which time it was known as the titular church of Julius and Callixtus, the former name being that of pope Julius, who had been involved in its establishment in the mid-fourth century. Priests serving there who attended a council of pope Symmachus are identified as being from the church of Julius; a priest attending a council in 595 is said to have served at the church of S Julius and Callistus. But during the late sixth century an icon of the Virgin that is still to be seen there was placed in the church, so that by the end of the century it was also being referred to as the church of S Mary.²⁰ What was done in one place could be done in another. For obvious reasons Boniface was unable to place relics of Mary, to whom the former Pantheon was chiefly dedicated, in the building, and so could not turn the temple into a church in the way Gregory had instructed. He seems to have overcome the difficulty posed by the absence of relics of the Virgin by placing in the church an icon of her, perhaps one of the gifts that Phocas had bestowed. If he did so, that an icon was considered a substitute for relics suggests the significance that was coming to be attributed to such images.²¹

Whereas the two Bonifaces had maintained traditions associated with Gregory I, **Deusdedit (19 October 615–8 November 618)** looked in a different direction. The son of a subdeacon who had presumably been responsible for giving him his pious name (‘God has given’), Deusdedit’s epitaph described him as a suckling who had been brought up from the beginning of his life

within the sheepfold of the church. In this he would have resembled Epiphanius, a bishop of Pavia who, having started out as a recruit in the heavenly militia on becoming a reader when scarcely eight, went on to become a subdeacon at the age of 18 and a deacon when 20; another child who was wearing clerical dress at the age of eight is known to have been a subdeacon later. But whereas Epiphanius, like many who enjoyed successful careers among the clergy, proceeded directly from the rank of deacon to that of bishop, when Boniface became pope he had already served as a priest for 40 years, and so must have already been a priest when Gregory I was still a layperson. It is hard to imagine someone more deeply rooted in whatever clerical establishment existed in Rome, or someone whose experience of life made him more likely to have been a custodian of its traditions; not surprisingly, he is said to have loved the clergy a great deal, and, somewhat mysteriously, to have summoned the priests and clergy back to their old places. On his death he left an entire stipend for the clergy, the first pope known to have done so.²² There may be a hint of his sympathies for the clergy in the numbers of men he ordained. During his 14 years as pope, Gregory I ordained 39 priests and five deacons. Whereas Sabinianus is not known to have ordained anyone, he seems to have restored to the clergy jobs that Gregory had transferred to monks. Boniface III did not ordain any clergy for the Roman church during his short pontificate, whereas Boniface IV ordained eight deacons, a surprisingly high number, but no priests during his three years in office. For his part, during his three years as pope Deus-dedit managed to hold three ceremonies of ordination, during which he ordained 14 priests, the first to have been ordained since the time of Gregory, and another eight deacons. The interpretation of such data is difficult; it is surprising that, in the space of 10 years, Deusdedit and his predecessor ordained 16 deacons, given that the full complement at any time was seven. The buoyancy in ordinations was sustained under the next pope, for during his six years Boniface V managed to ordain 26 priests and four deacons. But there is no reason to suspect Deusdedit and Boniface of having sought to profit from ordinations, as we have suggested more than one earlier pope had. Perhaps it would be better seen as indicating a preparedness to move men from the lower ranks within the body of the clergy to the higher, and presumably better remunerated, ranks of deacon and priest.²³

In 616 a new exarch, the eunuch Eleutherius, arrived in Ravenna. It was not the best time to enter upon this office, for his predecessor had been murdered, and it proved beyond the capacity of Eleutherius to carry out the task the emperor Heralius had given him, that of protecting the part of Italy not yet occupied by Lombards. Indeed, having been defeated by duke Sundrarius he was forced to agree to make an annual payment of 500 lbs of gold to these

enemies of the state.²⁴ Nevertheless, Eleutherius seems to have enjoyed good relations with Deusdedit, who received him well on a visit he paid to Rome when he was on his way to deal with rebels in Naples. Shortly after the death of Deusdedit, but before his successor assumed office, Eleutherius rebelled against the emperor. Being commanders of troops, exarchs and those associated with them were people to whom mutiny came easily. This was particularly true in Africa, from which Heraclius, the son of the exarch in Carthage, had led a force to Constantinople a few years earlier, overthrown Phocas, and succeeded him on the throne, while in 646 or 647 the exarch Gregory, perhaps a relative of Heraclius, rebelled and declared himself emperor, to no avail. Eleutherius is said to have assumed the king-ship, an expression that may bear the technical meaning of having taken a crown, and left Ravenna for Rome. But as he was setting out he was killed by a few of his soldiers at Luceoli, and his head was taken to Constantinople. One may ask why he decided to go to Rome. According to one source, when Eleutherius had clad himself in the purple in Ravenna he asked that a crown be given to him, but bishop John advised him to go to Rome to take the crown, it being there that the throne of the Empire abided. Rome certainly retained political mystique, and at a later time people believed that when the emperor Constans left Constantinople for the West in about 660 it was with a view to transferring the capital to Rome. But Eleutherius may have had a more practical reason for wishing to go there. Whereas the crown and purple garments he had adopted were important aspects of imperial regalia, for some time the patriarch of Constantinople had crowned a Byzantine emperor, and Eleutherius may have envisaged the pope playing a similar role in his elevation. Any hint that a pope had co-operated in a rebellion would have been political dynamite, and the murder of Eleutherius may have saved Deusdedit's successor from finding himself in a position he would rather not have been in.²⁵

Boniface V (23 December 619–25 October 625) took up office after the see had been vacant for an unusually short time. Whereas he was from out of town, being the son of a priest in the province of Valeria, he was another pope who loved the clergy; on his death he gave all the clergy an entire stipend for his funeral rites. We know of four decrees he issued. Those concerning the validity of wills and the right of asylum in churches need not detain us. The other two, however, are of a piece with his attitude towards the clergy, for in them Boniface ordered that no acolyte was to take it upon himself to lift up the relics of martyrs, but only a priest; and that in baptismal ceremonies at the Lateran not an acolyte but the subdeacons who were in attendance upon a deacon were to baptise with him. One has the sense of clerical privileges being safeguarded, and of a pope whose attitude in this respect stood in the tradition of such popes as Sabinianus. An epitaph of 20 lines was placed by his tomb, but

as it says far more about Boniface's character than his deeds we may conclude that his pontificate was not one of great achievement.²⁶

But there is something more to say about him. Three letters written by Boniface have come down to us, one of them addressed to a bishop of Canterbury, believed by the historian Bede to have been an archbishop, and the other two, written in an abstract style that their recipients can scarcely have appreciated, to a king and queen in the north of England. They were inserted into his *History* by Bede, who followed the practice of Eusebius in reproducing important documents word for word in his work. A priest from London, Nothelm, visited Rome in the early eighth century and, having obtained permission from pope Gregory II, examined the archives of the church, where he found letters bearing on English history written by Gregory I and other popes. He made copies of these which he passed on to Bede. Bede's inclusion of them in his *History* suggested to its later rulers a propensity on the part of Boniface to write letters, and this was not forgotten in England. Centuries later someone forged a letter in his name bearing on the rights of the archbishop of Canterbury that a historian of the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury, included in one of his works. By then the occupants of the see of Canterbury had come to hold a position of authority utterly at odds with the system of church government that Gregory had planned for England, and which anyone with access to Bede's *History* could read. Documents in the name of Boniface were forged to deal with that problem.²⁷ The three genuine letters of Boniface can only be a tiny fraction of those despatched in Boniface's name over six years, and they survive only because people in England thought it worth their while to preserve them, so that it would be unwise to assert that Boniface took a special interest in the English church.²⁸ In large measure, the body of evidence that survives for the popes of late antiquity reflects the interests of those who put pieces of it aside, and we shall later have to grapple with some of the consequence of this.

Deacons and the Clerical Establishment

Of the five popes who followed Gregory in such quick succession three were deacons at the time they were elected pope, whereas only Deusdedit is known to have been a priest beforehand. The pattern was not new, for most of the 20 popes between Leo and Gregory are known to have been deacons immediately before assuming episcopal office, and others may have been.²⁹ As the seventh century progressed the tendency would weaken, although more deacons

continued to become popes than one may have thought likely, for the elevation of a deacon to the episcopate without passing through the intermediate rank of priest is contrary not only to the practice of modern times, but that of many churches in late antiquity as well. Indeed, the standard practice of the Roman church during much of late antiquity flew in the face of the decrees of more than one pope. Centuries after he lived, pope Silvester (314–335) was believed to have laid down that anyone who wished to serve in a church or advance within it was to serve as a reader for 30 years, an exorcist for 30 days, an acolyte for five years, a subdeacon for five years, a guardian of the martyrs for five years, a deacon for seven years, and a priest for three years. Having been tested in every way, and being the husband of one wife who had been blessed by a bishop, such a person could advance to the rank of the episcopate. One has the sense of a precisely defined career structure, perhaps similar to that enjoyed by members of the civil service in Constantinople, where appointment to the position of assistant came after a period of nine years probation, although it was at variance with the pattern of advancement among the clergy that was current in Byzantium, where Justinian had prescribed that readers were to be at least 18. For a clergyman, a successful career would culminate in a passage from priesthood to episcopacy when he was some way into his 50s or older, and the legislation of popes in around 400 shows that this was the expected pattern.³⁰ Yet in Rome, until some way into the seventh century, bishops tended to be former deacons who had leapfrogged the rank of priest. In about 600, a patriarch of Alexandria was of the opinion that, since the time that pope Cornelius had chosen Novatian to be archdeacon, popes had been succeeded by their archdeacons. Whereas his understanding of events that took place in the middle of the third century was not accurate, the claim suggests that the accession of the senior deacon to episcopal office had come to thought of as a characteristic of the church of Rome, which is what one might have expected of someone described in a liturgical text as the vicar of the pope. The standard letters that were sent to the emperor and other interested parties after a new pope had been elected assumed that he would be an archdeacon. Behind this practice may linger early schematisations of clerical order, such as that suggested by a passage in a letter believed to have been written by Paul (1 Tim 3: 1–13), that considers the qualities appropriate to bishops and deacons, without reference to a level between these ranks, and it is possible that the practice of the Roman church was a partial survival of that of the very early church. Be this as it may, the frequent recruitment of popes from among the deacons suggests that it will be worth our while to consider the functions discharged by the clergy of this rank, in particular those within Rome, with a view to determining the kind of experience those who became popes may have had, and teasing out some of the implications that belonging

to what was clearly a small elite group within the clergy may have entailed. By doing this we shall also be able to investigate more fully some of the activities of the church, and to suggest some points of tension that may have existed within it, for the history of the church of Rome was tightly bound up with that of its college of deacons.³¹

This was connected with its small size. Early in the reign of Justinian, the cathedral and three nearby churches in Constantinople were served by 60 priests and 100 deacons, as well as throngs of junior clergy. One would have thought that this level of staffing would have been more than adequate, but by 612 it had swollen to include 80 priests and 150 deacons. A few years later, the church of the Virgin at Blachernai employed 12 priests and 18 deacons. Two groups of clergy from Ravenna who travelled to Rome while Felix IV was pope numbered between them 11 priests and 12 deacons.³² The churches of both Constantinople and Ravenna included more deacons than priests among their clergy, but practice in Rome was different. In the middle of the third century the clerical establishment there included 46 priests but a mere seven deacons, and stories told of martyrdoms that occurred in the time of Sixtus II a few years later take for granted that there would have been seven of them. Indeed, it was later believed that the apostle Peter had ordained seven deacons and that during the third century pope Fabian had gone on to assign a deacon to each of the regions of Rome, these being seven in number, and created seven subdeacons and seven notaries. We may well see here a later reality being projected backwards, but the lists of those attending synods and, less clearly, the general patterns for ordinations revealed by the figures given for each pope in the *Liber Pontificalis* suggest that, whereas the numbers of priests in the Roman church fluctuated wildly, the number of its deacons was both small and stable. Perhaps the church had appropriated a story in the Acts of the Apostles which describes Christ's disciples, annoyed at having to wait on tables, choosing seven men to carry out this task. In accordance with precedents in the Old Testament, the apostles laid their hands upon each of the seven. They were later taken to have been deacons, and although the biblical narrative does not use this word of them its root is present in the Greek verb for the serving that was their function. The ceremony of laying on hands is mentioned in later parts of the New Testament in a way that suggests ordination to a ministry within the church, and this seems to be the sense in which it is used here as well (Acts 6: 1–6; cf 1 Tim 4: 14, 2 Tim 1: 6).³³ More than once we have considered whether at various times there may have been an heir apparent to the current pope; if a future pope were likely to emerge from within a body of seven men, his identity must have frequently been the subject of informed speculation, whether or not the pope had indicated his wishes.

Evidence for things that would have been discussed in whispers rather than

committed to writing is necessarily sparse, but letters written by Ennodius when he was a deacon of the church at Milan are instructive. From 506 there were a number of occasions when this formidable networker found it worth his while to be in touch with the deacon Hormisdas, who had played a prominent part in the last of the synods presided over by pope Symmachus, and from 508 another deacon, Dioscorus, was sometimes associated with Hormisdas in the correspondence of Ennodius. It was in that year that Ennodius wrote expressing the hope that the pair would be able to deal with the awkward situation that had developed when Symmachus had failed to reimburse the bishop of Milan for expenses incurred on his behalf at Ravenna, presumably in smoothing the way for the government to accept him as pope; in the following year he requested a priest to ask the pope to aid him in some affair by means of Dioscorus, and to pass on greetings to Hormisdas, who was to send him a key. By the end of 510, or the beginning of the following year, Ennodius was writing to the useful Hormisdas in terms that suggested he was going to be the next pope. His accession turned out to be absolutely smooth, for Hormisdas became pope on the day after Symmachus died. Dioscorus was to follow in his footsteps, but his trajectory ended in failure, for his ordination in 530 took place on the same day as that of another man, and when Dioscorus died a few weeks later his rival remained as the undisputed pope.³⁴

An understanding that popes would generally be former deacons sat well with the close ties that were traditional between deacons and their bishops. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, an eastern work of the second half of the fourth century, goes so far as to see the relationship between bishop and deacon as being similar to that between the first and second persons within the Trinity. Gregory I thought of the priests, deacons, monks, and other clerics of the Roman church as all belonging to one household, but within this body he considered the deacons to be his sons. In a hymn attributed to Ambrose, Sixtus II was made to address Laurence as his son, but the term was no more than a function of their respective positions, for Augustine believed that Sixtus called Laurence his son simply because he was a bishop and Laurence his deacon. The language used of the relationship between bishop and deacon can be surprisingly affectionate. The best-documented friendship enjoyed by a pope in late antiquity, one that dated from his childhood, was superimposed on the relationship between that pope, Gregory I, and a subdeacon who later became a deacon, Peter. Indeed, the two senior ranks of the clergy in Rome could be distinguished in terms of who they represented: An embassy sent to Constantinople included 'a priest of the city of Rome' and 'a deacon of the apostolic see'. It followed from this that relations between the deacons and the priests, their nominal superiors who enjoyed the right to preside at the Eucharist, could be awkward.³⁵

Legislation enacted by church councils gives the impression that deacons were continually attempting to intrude into the honour and functions that belonged to priests. As early as 314, the council of Arles told deacons in town churches not to be presumptuous and to pay due honour to priests, while in 325 the council of Nicaea dealt with the problem of deacons who received Communion before the bishops whose servants they were and the priests whose inferiors they were, and tensions between deacons and priests are reflected in the canons of later councils with wearisome regularity.³⁶ Various markers were used to distinguish the superior dignity priests enjoyed from that of deacons. According to a text compiled in Gaul in the second half of the fifth century, a bishop was to sit together with his priests in church, but in a higher place, and when a bishop was seated a priest was not to be allowed to stand. A deacon, however, was to know that he was the servant of the priest. It was as though the latter were a bishop, and a deacon was only to sit when ordered to do so by a priest. Such a principle was followed in Rome, for early in the fifth century Jerome, a priest himself be it noted, describes the priests of Rome sitting while the deacons stood, although in the absence of the bishop the deacons took it upon themselves to be seated, and the practice was enforced by Gelasius at the end of the century. It can be observed at councils, where the priests sat, as did the pope, while the deacons stood by. But another author criticises the deacons of Rome for their arrogance, accusing them of thinking of themselves as the equals of priests and being seated when they should have been standing; it was as though the deacons had been ordained from among the priests, rather than the other way around.³⁷ In Rome, however, neither group was recruited from among the ranks of the other, for the offices of priest and deacon were the summits of two career structures. According to one, acolytes went on to become priests, whereas the other, more prestigious path saw subdeacons advancing to the rank of deacon. Occasionally we are able to detect the interests of the two groups diverging, as they did in 418, when rivals for papal office were backed by different bodies of clergy: The archdeacon Eulalius enjoyed the support of the deacons, very few of the priests, and what were described as the disorderly throng of the city, as well as the non-Christian prefect of the city, whereas the priest Boniface was backed by almost all the priests. In 687 the archpriest and the archdeacon would be rival candidates for the office of pope.³⁸

The functions exercised by deacons in Rome emerge most clearly in the stories that were told about the favourite martyr of that church, the deacon Laurence, who was put to death in the middle of the third century shortly after pope Sixtus II had been, allegedly by being roasted on a gridiron. Preaching on the anniversary of Laurence's death, pope Leo described him as having been pre-eminent in two ways, the ministry of the sacraments and the management

of the wealth of the church. Whereas these two roles were very different, they were central activities of deacons, and hence part of the background of many popes. It will be worth our while considering them both.³⁹

An account of the martyrdom of Laurence provided by Ambrose of Milan describes him asking Sixtus as he advanced towards his death where the latter was going without him, for it had never been the pope's practice to offer the sacrifice without him being present. Another story describes Laurence as the first among the seven men, by whom we are to understand the deacons, who stood close to the altar. Isidore of Seville believed that the apostles, or their successors, had established seven deacons for each church, and that the functions of these men were liturgical, comparable to those of seven angels who were mentioned in the book of Revelation. They stood around the altar as if they were its columns, and were clearly important people, for whereas the priest consecrated the sacrament, they were the ones who distributed it; a priest could not lift a chalice from the Lord's Table, but it was to be handed to him by a deacon. Indeed, the first time deacons are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* is in a liturgical context, when they are mentioned as watching over the bishop as he preached. The deacons had long possessed specific functions in the liturgy, such as leading intercessions and breaking the consecrated host before they distributed the sacrament; the pope himself received the sacrament from the archdeacon. And as we have seen, it had sometimes happened in Rome that people became deacons because they were good singers. Hence, although deacons could not preside at the Eucharist, they played a prominent part in its celebration. When Leo divided the higher clergy into the categories of the highest bishops, the priests of the second order, and the ministers of the sacrament, the third category comprised deacons, and when Gregory I wrote to another bishop of his having been ordained for service at the altar, he could take it for granted that his correspondent would understand it to refer to his having been made a deacon, rather than a priest. Whereas the small number of priests among those who advanced to papal office meant that, for most popes, the first mass they celebrated as bishop would have been the first occasion on which they had ever presided at a Eucharist, we need not fear that they were ill prepared for this task, for decades of standing beside their predecessors at the altar would have constituted a very thorough on-the-job training.⁴⁰

The second activity that Leo attributed to Laurence in his role of a deacon was the demanding one of administering the wealth of the church. A work attributed to Isidore of Seville lists among the functions of the senior deacon, the archdeacon, those of receiving money that had been collected, presenting it to the bishop, and then distributing proper shares to the clergy; other deacons, or subdeacons, such as Gregory's friend Peter, would have managed the assets

of the church directly. The portfolio of assets the church of Rome had accumulated in late antiquity was vast and immensely complex, but the responsibility of the church to spend some of its income in caring for the needy was never forgotten, and a famous story describes Laurence, having agreed with officials of the Roman state that he would produce the treasures of the church, bringing forward a multitude of the needy with the words, 'these people are the wealth of the church!' The mosaic that was installed in the church of S Laurence during the sixth century shows him holding a part of the Bible open at words that could be applied to him as he disbursed the riches of the church: 'He has dispersed, he has given to the poor.' Administrative ability of a kind that would allow the income of the church to be safeguarded and the poor to be supported was particularly prized in an archdeacon. One of the letters of pope Gelasius, addressed to an archdeacon and a defender, entrusted to them responsibility for the assets of the church of Volterra, many of which had passed beyond its control, and asked them to use their attentiveness to restore anything that had been lost.⁴¹ Towards the end of the fifth century a bishop in Gaul who was familiar with the ways of the world found himself describing someone who was going to become a bishop. In a pattern known from elsewhere, this person had begun a clerical career when he became a reader in his infancy. Thereafter he rose to become archdeacon, in which capacity he displayed what was described as diligent activity. The quality of diligent activity was one that Jerome claimed deacons sought when they elected one of their number to be archdeacon, although it is not entirely clear how one became an archdeacon; the office may have been bestowed by the bishop, as was believed to have happened when Cornelius chose Novatian. Diligent activity was clearly a quality thought desirable in an archdeacon, and hence a potential bishop, and documents from a slightly later period in Italy mention a number of secular offices where its exercise was looked for. These offices included those of the prefect of the annonae, a subordinate of the Prefect of the City who was responsible for the food supply of Rome, and the official who oversaw the production of the lime that was necessary for building. A prior record of diligent activity was appropriate in a vicar of the prefects, and it stood the duke of the rugged border area of Raetia in good stead, but it was not a quality ever associated with the more senior posts of prefect, master of the offices or the soldiers, or quaestor. The jobs for which diligent activity was thought desirable were clearly ones in which people got their hands dirty, and this was what archdeacons were expected to do.⁴²

An image of bishops devoting themselves to strictly spiritual and religious concerns comes easily to students of church history. But their daily responsibilities were quite different to the idealised version suggested by the book of *Pastoral Care* that Gregory wrote, no less than the similar books

written by Ambrose and John Chrysostom. Gregory's *Pastoral Care* needs to be set against his letters, over a quarter of which concern the management of the church's estates, which made the administrative experience that a deacon, in particular an archdeacon, acquired worthwhile training for some of the responsibilities exercised by a pope. For popes, like other bishops, expended a good deal of their energy on tasks they saw as trivial and distracting.

One of the most moving passages in the writings of Gregory I occurs in the preface to his *Dialogues*, where he describes himself sitting alone in a quiet place, oppressed by the tumults of worldly people in whose affairs he had been forced to become involved. Every day these people caused him grief, and he yearned for the life of contemplation he had previously enjoyed in his monastery. Whereas we cannot trace the daily impact of such people on Gregory's life, the topics dealt with in letters we may take to have been written by him, and the strategic moves he undertook in more than one area of administration, suggest that he did not run away from such burdens but, despite the annoyance they caused him, approached them with vigour and intelligence. Gregory's interlocutor in the *Dialogues* was his old friend Peter, whom he had immediately sent as a subdeacon to see to the affairs of the church in Sicily when he became pope, in a posting that included being rector of the patrimony on the island. Peter's career had been varied. Before being posted to Sicily he had been a defender of the Roman church in Ravenna, where he had managed to leave a sword behind with the bishop, and from Sicily he had moved to become rector of the patrimony in Campania. Now back in Rome, where he had been promoted to the rank of deacon, Peter was a highly able clergyman who would have been all too familiar with administrative responsibility, and Gregory must have felt that he could count on his sympathy for his predicament. A theme in some of Gregory's earliest letters after he became pope is the feeling of wretchedness that he immediately experienced on entering office, and a keen awareness of the burdens it imposed on him.⁴³ But, there is reason to believe that things went downhill thereafter. Gregory began his time in office publishing briskly, writing the *Pastoral Care* within a few months of becoming pope. Thereafter, in 592/593 he delivered homilies on the Gospels that were later written up; a series of addresses on the first portion of the book of Ezekiel and a section towards its end that were probably delivered in 592/593 were revised eight years later for publication. He was gathering material for the *Dialogues* in 593, and in 595 he was able to send a copy of his massive *Exposition of Job* to a friend. Considering that he remained in office until 604, Gregory's output obviously diminished as the years passed. Indeed, it did so more quickly than the rate at which his works appeared suggests, for his *Exposition of Job* was based on talks given in Constantinople to monks from his monastery who had accompanied him

there. Moreover, Gregory was prone to recycle material. Most of the anecdotes he told in his homilies on the Gospels were reused in the *Dialogues*, and there is material common to the *Pastoral Care* and the *Exposition of Job*, so that material is sometimes older than the works in which it occurs. Gregory loved to write, and his steady movement away from this activity suggests a growing weariness entailed by the hard, daily slog of business with which deacons and the popes some of them became were well acquainted.

The deacons thus emerge as an elite group within the Roman clergy, and carried out important functions more commonly than did the far more numerous priests. They specialised in intellectual activity. The two great authors among the popes of this period, Leo and Gregory, had both been deacons, but we may add to them lesser-known figures who had also made a name for themselves as scholarly deacons before they became popes: John, who engaged with Boethius and answered questions the senator Senarius posed on recondite matters of liturgical practice, became pope John I; Pelagius, who wrote a work on the Three Chapters in which he boastfully stated 'remember that you are a Christian and a deacon, and this of the highest church in the whole universe' and translated texts from Greek into Latin, became pope Pelagius I; John, a subdeacon who apparently became a deacon and was another translator of ascetic texts, seems to have become pope John III; Gregory, a man learned in the Scriptures who was able to answer every question the emperor Justinian II put to him, became pope Gregory II.⁴⁴ Whereas we know of learned deacons in other churches, such as Ennodius of Milan, later to become bishop of Pavia, and Liberatus of Carthage, the catalogue suggests that deacons were surprisingly well represented among the intelligentsia of the Roman church, to a far greater extent than the more numerous priests. They could approach people far away for help with difficult problems. After the difficulties that had arisen concerning the date on which Easter was to be celebrated in 455, the archdeacon Hilary laid on Victorius of Aquitaine the task of reporting on the differences between the Latin and Greek ways of calculating the date of Easter. In his reply Victorius stated that he had not been able to obey Hilary's command as well as he had wished, for the work was arduous, and his intelligence small, and his work was indeed of little value.⁴⁵ The intellectual output of popes in late antiquity may not be thought to have been strong, although when placed against the production of the occupants of other major Italian sees from the mid-fifth to the mid-eighth centuries it is impressive. The frequency with which popes were appointed from among the elite group of deacons may have been connected with this.

Another activity frequently engaged in by deacons who were on their way to becoming pope was a spot of diplomacy. It is tempting to identify the acolyte named Leo who delivered a message from Rome to bishop Aurelian of

Carthage in 418 with the later pope of that name, and if we choose to do so Leo will have had long experience in the arts of diplomacy when he was elected pope. People far away were aware of the influence of an archdeacon: A bishop in Syria approached an archdeacon of Rome, asking him to use his influence with the archbishop so that the churches of the East would enjoy his care. At the time Leo was elected pope in 440 he was in Gaul, where the emperor had sent him in an attempt to stitch up peace between the general Aetius and the praetorian prefect Albinus. On that occasion he had been acting on behalf of the state, but most of the embassies deacons undertook were on behalf of a pope. It had been in his capacity as deacon that Hilary had been entrusted with the difficult task of leading the Roman delegation to the council of Ephesus that turned out so badly, and that Pelagius I, a man of such expertise that the Ostrogothic king Totila sent him to Constantinople to speak with Justinian on his behalf, had accompanied both Agapetus and Vigilius on their trips to the city. Gregory I informed a queen of the Franks that he had been informed of the wish of the emperor by ‘our deacon’ in Constantinople, whereas the Roman delegation to the sixth ecumenical council would be led by the deacon who later became pope John V and included a subdeacon who is probably to be identified with the later pope Constantine.⁴⁶

But the deacon most experienced in difficult diplomacy was Ennodius’s correspondent Dioscorus. It was he who persuaded Theoderic to accept Symmachus as pope, and in 519 he was associated with the mission pope Hormisdas sent to Constantinople to deal with the Acacian schism, although the role he played in it is not easy to establish. When Hormisdas sent a letter to the emperor Justin introducing the members of the legation he named four of them: the bishops Germanus and John, the priest Blandus, and the deacon Felix—it is possible that the last named was the future pope Felix IV. Whereas one early version of the *Liber Pontificalis* names these four as well as Dioscorus as having been sent by Hormisdas, and adds the notary Peter to the list, another version states that Hormisdas sent these four and ‘received’ Dioscorus; whatever the exact meaning of this, the role of Dioscorus was understood as being different to that of the others. The nominal leader of the mission, bishop Germanus of Capua, was a well-regarded person, whose prayers were thought to have enabled a dead man who approached him in the baths to be delivered from a place of punishment, and whose soul someone far away could see being carried to heaven by angels in a fiery sphere when he died. Yet it was Dioscorus who enjoyed the privilege of corresponding with the pope in private letters, and he was the one the members of the legation chose to explain to the clergy of Constantinople why Acacius had been condemned, a task he carried out at a key meeting with great success.⁴⁷

Until the eighth century the most important representative of the pope was

his ambassador in Constantinople, the apocrisiarius. As an emperor of the seventh century saw it, in various situations, whether to do with dogmas or canons, or in any matter of church business whatsoever, this official would express and display the persona of the pope. Not surprisingly, the crucial task of ambassador at Constantinople often fell into the hands of a deacon. Gregory I, who had himself discharged it when a deacon, appointed to it two other deacons who went on to become pope, Sabinianus and Boniface, and explained to a queen of the Franks that the business of the church with the emperor was seen to by 'our deacon'. It is possible to detect in the late fourth century a tendency for Italian deacons who had accumulated experience in trips to the East going on to hold prestigious sees, and the same process was at work within the church of Rome. The diplomat who becomes a pope is a familiar figure in the recent history of the church, but such people existed in late antiquity.⁴⁸

Their combination of literary and diplomatic experience made deacons natural choices when popes needed someone to draft sensitive correspondence, and again, a good number of future popes can be found among the deacons known to have carried out this task. The wording of letters sent in the names of popes Simplicius and Felix III is sometimes so close to that of letters sent by Gelasius as to suggest that it was he who wrote them. The amount of material the first *Constitutum* of Vigilius shares with the *Defence of the Three Chapters* Pelagius wrote not long after could be held to indicate that the deacon had a hand in drafting the earlier document, although other explanations are possible. When the future Gregory I was still a deacon, he wrote a long and complex letter to a bishop in northern Italy on behalf of Pelagius II. In turn, the deacon Boniface who handled some of his correspondence is probably to be identified with pope Boniface IV. Whereas work of this kind was not necessarily undertaken by deacons, Jerome being known to have drafted correspondence on behalf of pope Damasus when he was a priest, they seem to have undertaken it with remarkable frequency.⁴⁹ Similarly, deacons would read out documents in councils, as Hormisdas did in the time of Symmachus. Surprisingly, three addresses on the reconciliation of penitents were delivered by an archdeacon in the presence of the pope during the fifth century. Given the status of a bishop as the source of teaching in his church, this was a high honour, and is a further sign of the standing of the deacons in Rome.⁵⁰

The status of priests and deacons was thus the reverse of that in the modern church. Like their modern counterparts, the priests attached to the titular churches presided at the Eucharist, performed baptisms, and dealt with penitents. But more significant were the deacons, intelligent men skilled at liturgy and administration who were trusted with diplomatic tasks. There is one other indication of their standing. Deacons were often to be found

administering the church during the interregnum that came between the death of a pope and the ordination of his successor, a task that became more important during the period in the sixth and seventh centuries when consent to the person who had been elected had to be obtained from Constantinople. On his way to martyrdom in 254, pope Lucius was later believed to have given authority over the church to his archdeacon, Stephen, who succeeded him as pope, just as Sixtus, in prison while awaiting martyrdom, was believed to have handed over all the assets and treasures of the church to Laurence, to allocate as he pleased. The arrangements Vigilius made for the governance of the church during his absence were not as clear-cut. While on his way to Constantinople he arranged for a priest to serve as his deputy and a bishop to guard the Lateran and govern the clergy, but the arrangements came badly unstuck when the bishop was killed by Goths. Management of the church seems later to have rested with the deacon Pelagius, and then a priest, Mareas. Following the death of pope Severinus, a letter was sent to some Irish clergy in the names of Hilary the archpriest, serving in place of the holy apostolic see; John the deacon, and in the name of God the pope elect; John, the first among the notaries of the holy apostolic see; and the servant of God, John, counsellor of the same apostolic see. Similarly, pope Martin expected that while he was away his place would be filled by the archdeacon, the archpriest, and the first of the notaries, in that order. When Constantine went to Constantinople in 710 he left a deacon as his deputy, who came to a sad end when the exarch cut his throat. Over the centuries, deacons were prominent during interregna. But by the time of Constantine their hold on power was weakening.⁵¹

Before leaving the clergy, it will be well to consider what their social origins may have been. Some have held that popes came from high levels of the aristocracy, but the evidence that has been adduced is not persuasive.⁵² Unless I am mistaken, no pope can be shown to have been closely related to any holder of the office of consul in the period before it ceased to be available to private citizens in 541, although Vigilius was the son and brother of praetorian prefects. On the other hand, Leo I pointed out that the prerogative of fathers had ceased, and that the church, passing over the rank of families, accepted as her bishops those whom the Holy Spirit had prepared. The implication that those foremost within the church did not necessarily spring from families who were to the fore in the surrounding world is strengthened when the situation in Rome is compared with the very different one that had emerged in Gaul, where the episcopate was often populated by bishops of senatorial background and informed by senatorial values that are hard to detect among the bishops of Rome. Of the seven laymen of distinguished rank who joined Liberius in subscribing to the proceedings of the council of Orange in 529, two seem to have gone on to become bishops of Vienne.⁵³ Having said this, the baths and

libraries that Hilary built near S Laurence's when he moved there suggest a man not unused to a comfortable life. We have seen some popes who were associated with the Caelian Hill, a number who came from houses large enough to be turned into monasteries or other institutions, and some, like the next three popes we shall consider in their own right, for whom various pieces of evidence suggests that they came from wealthy and established families.

What of the broad mass of the clergy? Some idea of their standing is provided by what we can deduce concerning their salaries, for whereas there is no direct indication of how much they were paid, evidence from a comparable church is suggestive. Some way into the sixth century, the church of Ravenna enjoyed an annual income from its endowments of 12,000 solidi, of which, in accordance with the traditional formula, 3,000 went to the clergy. We know Ravenna enjoyed the services of something over 60 clergy at that time, so they would have enjoyed an average income of some 50 solidi per annum, although those of senior rank would doubtless have received a larger share. Such salaries are broadly reminiscent of those received by men who worked in the civil service, although it is clear that high-ranking clerks in the employment of the state could expect to earn more than the clergy. Whereas a recent suggestion that the backgrounds of the clergy were in the liberal professions, lower ranks of the bureaucracy, manufacture, and trade is hypothetical, it may well be true. The ease with which a public servant such as Arator, a man of senatorial family, seems to have joined the clergy, and the adoption of careers in the civil service by the brothers of such popes as Vigilius and Gregory I, suggests that there may have been families that regarded service among the clergy in the same light as working for the government, and what was true of such high-flyers may have been true at lower and less well-documented levels. One piece of linguistic evidence suggests that bureaucratic and clerical office were looked on in the same way. Whereas the Greek word we translate as ordination literally means 'laying on hands', the corresponding Latin word is not specifically Christian. Pope Hormisdas wrote to the deacon Dioscorus that he planned to write to Justinian with the suggestion to ordain the deacon archbishop of Alexandria. He can scarcely have expected the emperor to lay hands on Dioscorus for the purpose of ordination; rather, he was using the word in the old sense of nominating or appointing someone to a secular office. In speaking of ordination, the Latin church borrowed a term from the civil service. Families who placed their young sons among the clergy, no less than the men who entered its ranks when they were adults, would have been confident that their prospects for a comfortable life were bright, just as they would have been had they joined the civil service.⁵⁴

Indeed, a career among the clergy was sufficiently attractive for some to pay for members of their families or themselves to be ordained. Simony, as it was

called after a figure named Simon who had offered the apostles money in exchange for the ability to bestow the Holy Spirit (Acts of the Apostles, 8: 18–24), was an old problem to which the council of Chalcedon responded firmly: Those who paid a bishop to ordain them or promote them to a higher function within the church were to derive no advantage from such an ordination or promotion. Yet there is reason to believe that it remained a normal part of church life. It was certainly rife in Constantinople, where it was taken for granted that the emperor would receive promises and gifts made by people seeking to influence the appointment of a patriarch, but elsewhere it operated within the church. The epitaph of Pelagius I mentions that although he ordained many people he did not do this for money, as though he could have been expected to have done so, and the formulaic nature of the terms in which simony in Gaul and other distant areas was condemned in letters sent in the name of Gregory I suggests that whoever drafted the letters was copying a standard template. Bishops who engaged in simony obviously benefitted from the payments made to them. As we have seen, the practice of simony by pope Symmachus may explain the 92 ordinations to the priest-hood and the still more remarkable figure of 16 ordinations to the diaconate he carried out during his 16 years as pope. Given that his pontificate was marked by schism, some of his many ordinations may have been made to fill the gaps left by clergy who transferred their loyalty to Laurentius, and during the eighth century the antipope Constantine would ordain eight priests and four deacons during a short period. But even so, it is inconceivable that the college of seven deacons needed to be replenished more than twice, and the financial difficulties Symmachus is known to have experienced may have prompted him to raise money by selling offices. Another pope, Leo I, ordained 81 priests and 31 deacons during his 21 years of office, figures that stand in stark contrast to the 58 priests and 11 deacons ordained by Simplicius during a pontificate of almost equal length shortly afterwards. A story later told in the East, according to which Leo had obtained from Peter a promise that all his sins were forgiven except those concerning ordinations, may preserve memories that he had received money in exchange for ordaining people. The ordination of additional clergy would impose no burden on the church, for as the sum available to pay them was capped at a quarter of its income, a larger body of clergy would not increase its outgoings; rather, the sum available would be divided into smaller shares. But simony was a transaction from which both parties believed they derived benefit. Byzantine legislation reveals a situation that was less black and white than the canon passed at the council of Chalcedon, and indicates why people were prepared to pay to be ordained, for it stipulated that a clergyman ordained to any grade was to give nothing to the person who ordained him or anyone else, beyond what was customary, and that whatever

sum was paid was not to exceed the financial advantage the person ordained would derive over one year. Simony, then, was not merely something to which hard-pressed or greedy bishops resorted, but a process by which someone would outlay a sum that he would expect to recoup from his office. The preparedness of people to pay to gain an appointment or advancement to a higher level, which was also common in the civil service, is another sign of how desirable many people regarded a position among the clergy as being.⁵⁵

Boniface V was succeeded by a man of a very different kind. After four popes whose parents had given them explicitly Christian names, that of **Honorius (27 October 625–12 October 638)** had a traditional Roman stamp, no less than the name of his father, Petronius. Indeed, Petronius is described as having been a consul. This would have been a remarkable anachronism if it were understood to refer to an ordinary consul, for only emperors had held that office since 541. If the term was intended to convey an exact meaning, Petronius may have held one of the honorary consulates that continued to be available in the Empire, sometimes at a price. We know of one attempt by a westerner to pay for one at the end of the sixth century, and although it may not have been successful someone described as a consul and duke is known from Rome in 663, and people described as a consul and an exconsul were among the beneficiaries of largesse from a pope in the following century. Whatever its exact meaning may have been, the title attached to the father of Honorius is clearly meant to suggest that he was a person of standing in the secular world. Other things point in the same direction. Honorius was born in Campania, where the estates of the Roman nobility had often been located, and his house in Rome has been identified with a part of the Domus Vectiliana that had been restructured during the fifth century. Moreover, a reference in his epitaph to his having desired to follow in the footsteps of Gregory invites us to see him as operating in a manner that would have come naturally to men of the background they had in common; among other things they shared was a house large enough to be turned into a monastery. An English author of the following century felt that he had been among Gregory's disciples. And it may have been private wealth that allowed Honorius to build in the way he did.⁵⁶

Honorius undertook works of building and renovation on a scale unprecedented since the days of Constantine. He devoted part of his energies to S Peter's, where among other undertakings he renewed all the sacred equipment, covered the doors with silver, and clad the area around the tomb of the apostle with pure silver; all in all, 1,359 lbs of silver were lavished on the adornment of this church and the adjacent S Andrew's. Its great, silver-clad doors were known as the royal doors, a term that recalls the central door of the set of three doors, itself the innermost of three sets, that led from the narthex into the main body of the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople,

through which the emperor made his solemn entrance into the church. Given that Rome was rarely visited by royalty, the term must have been borrowed from the corresponding doors in Constantinople, so its adoption in Rome suggests a looking towards the royal city. Honorius also saw to the roofing of S Peter's, placing 16 roof beams over it and covering the roof with bronze tiles which had been removed from a building owned by the state, having obtained permission from the emperor Hera-clius to do this.⁵⁷

More impressive than this work of restoration were the churches that Honorius erected. The *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with eight of them, although we may hesitate to accept this figure, for people in late antiquity were often inclined to credit people with buildings for which they were not responsible. Immediately after attributing the building of the church of the Virgin at Blachernai to Justinian, the Byzantine historian Procopius claimed that works carried out in the time of his predecessor were to be credited to that emperor; however, even this degree of evasiveness did not cover the situation, for, as many of his readers must have been aware, the church had been built in the middle of the fifth century. Five of the eight churches we are told that Honorius was responsible for are described as having been built by him from the ground up, which suggests that they were new works; but even this need not have been true, for we learn from an inscription that the basilica of S Pancras, described in the *Liber Pontificalis* as having been built by Honorius from the ground up, was in large part rebuilt by him. But however the list of the churches attributed to Honorius may be pruned, his achievement was considerable.⁵⁸

The jewel among the churches for which Honorius could claim full responsibility is the one dedicated to the virgin martyr Agnes. She was the most popular of the female martyrs of Rome, and although her name seems to have been derived from the Greek word for 'pure', westerners playfully connected it with the Latin word for lamb, *agnus*, so that she was shown accompanied by a lamb in a mosaic depicting a procession of female saints in the church of San Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna. In the fourth century a daughter of Constantine, Constantina, had paid for the construction of a large basilica near her tomb, traces of which can still be seen, and arranged to be buried nearby in a round mausoleum now known as the church of S Constanza. The beautifully executed epitaph of an abbess, Serena, who was buried near the tomb in 514, suggests that the site remained a centre of activity, and a monastery that seems to have been associated with the church in the time of pope Leo III may have already existed in her time. The church Honorius built adjacent to Constantia's work was a little smaller than that which Pelagius II had erected half a century earlier in honour of another Roman martyr, Laurence, the layout of which it imitated, so that in both cases

easy access to the tomb of the martyr was provided. A mosaic in the apse, glowing with gold, shows just three figures. It was executed in a style less naturalistic than that of the mosaic at S Laurence's, for whereas the individuals are meant to be understood as standing on a swathe of green, they appear to float in space. In the commanding middle position stands the young martyr, clad in the vestments of an empress. She had come a long way since the poet Prudentius had imagined her, some 250 years earlier, as laughing as she made her way to heaven at people's thirst for silver and gold and the vain display of embroidered clothing. To her left stands Honorius, offering her a model of the church. In the more crowded scene on the triumphal arch at S Laurence's, it was Christ rather than the martyr to whom Pelagius offered a model of the church he had built, and that Agnes fulfilled this role suggests that the cult of the martyr, if not the martyrs in general, was buoyant. To her right stands a figure who is probably to be identified with the pope in whose footsteps Honorius sought to tread, Gregory, who holds a book.⁵⁹

Among his other projects, Honorius was responsible for building or renewing churches dedicated to the Roman martyr Cyriacus, to the mysterious Four Crowned Ones (*Quattro Coronati*), their crowns being those they had gained when they become martyrs in Rome, and, some 20 miles outside the city, to S Severinus. The cult of the holy man who had been buried near Naples in the time of pope Gelasius had persisted, and late in the sixth century Gregory I sought relics of him to place in a church in Rome. Honorius also turned the Curia Iulia, where the senate had formerly met, into a church dedicated to a martyr from Nicomedia, S Hadrian. He undertook a substantial renovation of the basilica that Symmachus had erected just outside the city in honour of S Pancras, another Roman martyr who was believed to have been put to death at the age of 14, and built a church in honour of S Lucy, a martyr of Syracuse whose cult had spread to Rome. Honorius was clearly active in promoting the cults of many saints, from Rome and elsewhere. But the impulses behind another of his foundations were more than purely devotional.⁶⁰

Within a portico of S Peter's, Honorius established a basilica dedicated to the martyr S Apollinare. The saint was believed to have been a native of Antioch who had accompanied Peter to Rome and later been despatched by him to be the first bishop of Ravenna, where his cult had become strong. Whereas it has to be admitted that evidence for his ever having existed is not powerful, in the 530s work began on a church dedicated to him in the port of Classe, a few kilometres out of Ravenna, probably at the spot where he was thought to have been buried. A large mosaic in the apse of that church depicts the saint in a commanding pose, and, just as the bishops of Rome had come to be buried in the basilica dedicated to Peter on the fringes of Rome, from the

end of the sixth century those of Ravenna were buried in the church dedicated to Apollinare, where people took oaths before his body, just as they did before that of S Peter in Rome, in accordance with a practice that had become common; Gregory I envisaged himself as praying for an African bishop at the body of Peter, whereas his colleague prayed for him at the body of Cyprian the martyr, and describes an oath being sworn at Peter's body by an abbot charged with serious offences. The cult of Apollinare took a long while to arrive in Rome, unlike that of the martyrs of another great church of northern Italy, for pope Innocent had dedicated a church in honour of SS Gervasius and Protasius early in the fifth century, not long after Ambrose had discovered their relics in 386. In building a basilica in honour of the patron saint of a church that, from the time of Justinian, had been keen to assert its independence from Rome, Honorius was responding to a developing situation. It was at about that time that someone wrote a story of the passion of Apollinare that gave details of his alleged relationship with S Peter. The tale is implausible, if for no other reason than its anachronistic assumptions concerning the function of a bishop in apostolic times. By building a church dedicated to a saint who symbolised the aspirations of the church of Ravenna for independence from Rome, and placing it within the complex of S Peter's, Honorius was attempting to domesticate his cult. The same motive stood behind a curious liturgical practice Honorius instituted, according to which every Saturday a litany was sung in procession from S Apollinare to S Peter's, in which he hoped the entire populace would take part. Placed in this setting, there was no danger that the cult of Apollinare would escape the oversight of Peter.⁶¹

Other evidence suggests that Honorius was interested in northern Italy. In 628 he wrote to the bishops of Venetia and Istria instructing them to display sincere obedience to their head by consecrating as bishop of Grado Primogenius, a Roman subdeacon, in place of a renegade who had run away from the territory controlled by the emperor to what are described as gentile peoples. His epitaph triumphantly noted Honorius's success in ending the Istrian schism after 70 years, although some adherents of the Three Chapters remained unreconciled. He also wrote to a Lombard duke of Benevento, whom he described as a person who was known for his justice, particularly in matters to do with God, asking him to detain a runaway monk. Doubtless the pope found it necessary to express himself in a diplomatic way, but the evidence points to steady success, and the possibility of co-operation with the Lombards who were capable of causing such grief.⁶²

Honorius also acted in a novel way that is only known to us from two lines of his epitaph, according to which the disbelief of the Jewish people was overcome under him, as he returned to the Lord a single, loyal sheep-fold. References to sheep are common in the epitaphs of popes of the period, but

here a biblical image has been added to the formulaic language (John 10: 16).⁶³ The statement is surprising, for it shows that Honorius departed from the policy of earlier popes, none of whom sought the systematic conversion of Jews. The place Jews occupied in the society of late antiquity is difficult to establish, although the increasing centrality of law in Jewish life suggests that they were coming to be more sharply distinguished from mainstream society. Nevertheless, direct and indirect evidence suggests that they were numerous and well regarded. The Jewish practice of counting the days in a series of seven that formed a week became widespread in ancient times, and the name of the last of these days, the Sabbath, seems to be reflected in that of Justinian's father, Sabbatios. By the first century AD many Jews were living in Trastevere, the area of Rome to the west of the river, and it will have been to members of this group who had become Christians that S Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans.⁶⁴

From the earliest days of the church, the question of what attitude towards Jews is appropriate for Christians has been a point of recurrent tension. Among the fathers of the Western church, for example, Ambrose took a more negative line than Augustine. Moreover, the way in which someone thought of the Jews of biblical times need not have been the way he thought of those who lived around him. Preaching on the passion of Christ, pope Leo blamed Jews far more than Pilate for the crucifixion, accusing them of disloyalty and emphasising their blindness. But some eastern bishops were astonished at a report that Leo had freed not only Christians who had been taken captive by Attila but Jews and pagans as well. For his part, whereas Gregory I was prepared to offer inducements such as reduced taxation to encourage Jews to become Christians, he had opposed attempts to convert them by force. This had happened in the Gallic town of Clermont in 565 when, amid scenes of violence during which a mob destroyed a synagogue, bishop Avitus prevailed upon many Jews to adopt Christianity. He mentioned Christ's words that He had other sheep who were outside His sheep-fold whom He wished to bring into it so that there would be one flock and one shepherd, so expanding the biblical image used in connection with Honorius's policy towards Jews. Those who refused to be baptised left the town, making their way to Marseilles. But Avitus's success was not well regarded in Rome. In 591 Gregory wrote to the bishops of Marseilles and Arles, informing them that men of the Jewish religion had told him that many Jews in those parts had been brought to the baptismal font by force, not preaching. Gregory did not approve, fearing that people who had been brought to baptism not by the sweetness of preaching but by force were likely to return to their earlier belief. In the same way, he advised a bishop of Naples, where there was a strong Jewish presence, to try and convert Jews by blandishments rather than acts of hostility; reason and

kindness, backed up with arguments drawn from the Old Testament, were needed. Gregory did believe that the whole Jewish people would be converted, but his time frame was such as to defer the coming of one sheepfold, for he believed that this would only occur at the end of the world, when the aversion they displayed towards the church would be replaced by their conversion.⁶⁵

The reason for Honorius's deciding to bring Jews into the one sheepfold is not hard to find. In the time of the emperor Heraclius (610–641) vast swathes of imperial territory had been lost to Persian invaders, who, having taken Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, went so far as to besiege Constantinople itself, together with their allies the Avars, in 626. After an immense struggle the aggressors were beaten off, the lost provinces reoccupied, and, in an act that would resonate in Christian history, the True Cross that the Persians had removed from Jerusalem was triumphantly returned in 631. Scapegoats for the disaster were not hard to find. Jews were known to have collaborated with the Persian invaders during the Empire's dark days, and when Heraclius reestablished control over the lands that had been lost he was in no mood to be gentle. So it was that he ordered that all Jews in the Empire were to be baptised. It was a new policy. Following his conquest of Africa, Justinian had listed synagogues among the places of non-Catholic worship that were to be turned into churches, but he did not subsequently take this step when Italy was conquered, and certainly did not order that people be baptised. Indeed, the legal code he issued reproduced legislation of the fifth century according to which Jews and pagans who lived quietly were to be left in peace. Heraclius's unprecedented step did not turn out to be a great success, for a few years later Jews were among rioters who sacked the cathedral of Hagia Sophia; but for a time strong efforts were made to implement it. The West did not escape its impact. A Jew who arrived in Carthage in 634 was baptised, and Heraclius went to the trouble of asking the Frankish king Dagobert to bring all the Jews in his kingdom to the Catholic faith by baptism, a request to which the king immediately complied. Some years later the Lombard king Charibert made Jews convert by being baptised, putting to the sword those who resisted. When reports reached Spain, where king Sisebut had recently ordered that all Jews were to be baptised, that Heraclius was permitting baptised Jews to return to their former religion, its bishops wrote to Honorius, urging him to take a firm line with the emperor. What could be more natural than for Honorius to do what others were doing, and execute imperial policy in bringing Jews into the Christian sheepfold? This was particularly the case given that, following the Byzantine reconquest of Italy, it was assumed that Italy would have the same laws as the rest of the Empire, an expectation fully borne out in the case of Gregory I's policies towards the Jews, in which adherence to Roman law was the one consistent thread. Seen in this light, Honorius's deviation from the

practice of preceding popes concerning Jews reflected Heraclius's deviation from the practice of preceding emperors.⁶⁶

But when Honorius accommodated himself to another of Heraclius's policies the results were disastrous. The provinces that he had won back from the Persians were those where the Miaphysite opinion that ran contrary to the teaching of the council of Chalcedon was strong, and, just as Zeno and Justinian had done, he sought a means of reconciling those who held it with the adherents of that council, among whom the church of Rome was foremost. In his endeavours Heraclius enjoyed the co-operation of Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople. An old ally of the emperor who had played a prominent role when the city was besieged in 626, Sergius became convinced that those who believed that Christ had one nature and those who credited him with two could be united if all were prepared to agree that he possessed a single energy, or operation. His proposal was initially well received, but it ran aground on the fervent opposition of Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem. Nothing daunted, Sergius changed his ground, and proposed instead that in Christ there was only one will, a teaching known as Monothelitism. When Sergius sought the approval of Honorius, the pope made a fatal mistake by committing himself to the position that, whereas it was wrong to say that there was one energy in Christ, he indeed had one will. Honorius professed that he was not interested in just how such a will may have functioned, being content to leave such matters to grammarians, but he would have done well to have taken it more seriously.⁶⁷ Fortified by the pope's acceptance of the formula, Heraclius issued an edict known as the Ekthesis, according to which Christ had one will, and had it posted in the narthex of Hagia Sophia late in 638. The emperor was later said to have written to pope John IV disclaiming responsibility for the Ekthesis, maintaining that Sergius had asked him to sign it and he assented to the request, but this seems to have been an attempt to obscure his continued adherence to the doctrine of Monothelitism, for shortly before he died he had written to another pope seeking to win the other over to it. By the end of 638 Honorius and Sergios were both dead. Each left a major piece of business for those who followed him.⁶⁸

Like his predecessor, **Severinus (28 May–2 August 640)** bore a traditional name, as had his father, Avienus. Indeed, the names Avienus and Severinus had each been borne by more than one consul in the last 100 years when this office was available to people other than emperors, and so we may suspect that the family was another with a lofty past. The interval of over 18 months that passed between the death of Honorius and the ordination of Severinus suggests that the emperor Heraclius was seeking a pope who would assent to the teaching of his Ekthesis. But the most interesting events that concerned Severinus were local, and occurred while he was waiting to begin what would

turn out to be a very short period in office. They are only known from one source, which describes them in slightly confusing terms.

One of the officers in the Byzantine army, Maurice, decided to plunder the papal residence, and asked the soldiers in Rome why Honorius had accumulated so much wealth while there was no money for the army. Indeed, he claimed that the pope had hidden money the emperor had sent to pay the soldiers. He and all the armed men in Rome went to the episcopal palace, where their path was blocked by Severinus and his followers. But Maurice was able to occupy the palace, whereupon he sealed all the goods that various emperors, patricians, and consuls had left to St Peter for the redemption of their souls, the feeding of the needy, or the freeing of captives. He then wrote to the exarch Isaac in Ravenna, telling him what he had done. Isaac came to Rome and sent every one of the leading men of the church into exile. Having disposed of any potential opposition, he entered the palace, where, in the course of eight days, he helped himself to all the goods he could find, some of which he prudently sent to the emperor. Then Severinus was ordained, and Isaac returned to Ravenna.⁶⁹

The colourful story touches on important trends that were occurring at the time. Between them, the Gothic wars and the coming of the Lombards had brought about the virtual liquidation of the old landowning aristocracy in Italy. There, as elsewhere in Western Europe, society had been simplified, so that two powerful elements remained, the army and the church. It was sometimes difficult to maintain equilibrium between them, so that when many people in the north of England laid aside their arms and adopted the monastic life during the early eighth century, a thoughtful observer, himself a monk, commented that a future age would see what the outcome of this would be.⁷⁰ Military men and ecclesiastics frequently clashed over the control of resources, as when a Frankish king of the sixth century, Chilperic, complained that all wealth had passed into the hands of bishops, and tore up wills through which people directed wealth to them.⁷¹ The wealth that had been bequeathed to churches was a temptation to those who led armies in difficult times. When the Empire was threatened early in the seventh century, Heraclius took over assets of the church to support his army, and 100 years later a Frankish military leader, Charles Martel, would seize church estates. The people who acted in this way were certainly not animated by hostility towards religion. We know from an inscription dated to 639 that at about the time he was ransacking the Lateran the exarch Isaac had a church dedicated to Mary built in the town of Torcello, and that its construction had been the responsibility of the military commander Maurice.⁷² Tensions between the military and ecclesiastical arms of society reflected the desire of both parties to use wealth for their own purposes.

During the seventh century the church of Rome increasingly experienced the impact of such developments. Maurice and Isaac are the first military men known to have intervened in the affairs of the church of Rome, and this is the first occasion on which we hear of the army, a word used here to refer to soldiers serving in Rome, being involved in them. Whereas in earlier times the clergy and people had been responsible for electing a new bishop, and later the body of the clergy, it began to be accepted that the army would play a role. It may have become prominent in Ravenna earlier, for military banners were carried by those who welcomed a bishop of that city in the middle of the sixth century, and by the end of the century soldiers in active service were among those in the city to whom Gregory I addressed a letter.⁷³ The changing nature of society is caught in the metaphors applied to two popes in inscriptions: Whereas the term 'God's consul' that was used to describe Gregory looked back to the supreme officials of ancient Rome, the person who referred to Honorius as the 'commander of the people' a few decades later thought of him as exercising a kind of military function. Hereafter the army would frequently play a role in the history of the church of Rome, but one less antagonistic than the story of Maurice and Isaac might suggest, for the army and the bishop of Rome would often work together.⁷⁴

The story also tells of the exarch, the official who, holding the military and civil powers that in earlier times had been kept separate from each other, governed the Byzantine territories in Italy from his headquarters in Ravenna. Exarchs were often sinister figures in papal discourse. Before he plundered the papal residence, Isaac had already had dealings with Honorius. The Lombard king Agilulf and his wife Theodelinda were the parents of Adaloald, who was baptised a Catholic at Easter 603 and succeeded his father in 616. Not surprisingly, he was a friend of the Roman church. But in 625, or the following year, he was overthrown by a man of anti-Nicene convictions, Arioald. On hearing that some bishops to the north of the River Po had encouraged support for the new ruler, contrary to the oath they earlier had sworn to Agilulf, Honorius had written to Isaac, asking him to send them to Rome, for such a crime ought not to pass unpunished. The outcome of this request is unknown, but when, a few years later, the new king offered Isaac a reduction in the annual payment the Empire made to the Lombards in return for killing one of his enemies, the exarch was pleased to assist. Having enticed his victim to Ravenna under false pretences he lured him into the city unarmed and quickly made an end of him and his companions. One has the feeling that the exarch was reacting to circumstances as they developed rather than pursuing his own policies. Some years later, his henchman Maurice, who had been responsible for the plundering of the property of the Roman church, turned against him, claiming that Isaac had wanted to make himself the ruler. The army took an

oath to support Maurice, but when a force Isaac had despatched arrived in Rome his supporters melted away. The rebel fled to the church of Sta Maria Maggiore, but did not find asylum there. He was dragged out of the church, a halter was placed around his neck, and in this humiliating state he was despatched towards Ravenna, to be beheaded 12 miles from the city. In accordance with a practice that was becoming common at the time, his head was taken into the city and placed on a pole, where it would serve as an example. Isaac did not live long after his sordid success.⁷⁵

If the behaviour of the exarchs was often a source of sorrow to popes, the attitudes of their enemies the Lombards could be surprisingly good. In 636 Adaloald was in turn succeeded by Rothari, the only king Paul the deacon, the great historian of the Lombards, explicitly states was an 'Arian'. He attacked the exarchate, seizing territory and, it was said, causing the deaths of 8,000 men under Isaac's command. After he died in 652 he was buried near a church dedicated to John the Baptist. A story was told, according to which a thief who broke into his tomb was threatened by the saint, who asked why he had dared to touch the body of someone who, although guilty of improper belief, had commended himself to him. The thief endured an unusual punishment: Whenever he attempted to enter the church he was gripped around his throat, and had to withdraw. Just as the interests of the church and the army could sometimes coincide, so the dichotomy between the forces of the Catholic emperor led by the exarch, whose subjects the popes were, and their frequently non-Catholic Lombard antagonists, was not necessarily sharp.⁷⁶

The successor of Severinus, **John IV (24 December 640–12 October 642)** was a deacon who had begun his life in Dalmatia. His father, Venantius, bore a name that had been that of a number of consuls during the sixth century, and had been employed as a legal official (*scholasticus*). Whereas we do not know who employed him, a holder of this office in Naples owned a house substantial enough to be turned into a convent a few decades earlier, suggesting that he was another pope to come from a prosperous background.⁷⁷ The new pope quickly turned his attention to the problem that had developed over whether Christ had one or two wills. The position adopted by Sergius and approved by Honorius was difficult to square with the traditional teaching of the Roman church, for Leo himself had thought of Christ as possessing two wills when he envisaged his weaker will yielding to his higher one during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Early in 641, at the time of year when bishops were least inclined to travel, John presided over a synod that affirmed that Christ had two wills and operations, and anathematised those who held the contrary. After Heraclius died in February of that year he wrote to the new emperor, Constantine III, asking him to withdraw all copies of the Ekthesis and attempting to defend Honorius's position. He claimed that the two wills that

the pope had denied Christ to have possessed were no more than the two contrary wills of the flesh and the spirit that sinful humans have. No less than the apostle Paul, Honorius had adjusted his language to suit his audience, and it did not follow from there only being one will in Christ's human nature that there was only one will common to his divinity and humanity, a position that would be thoroughly contrary to the truth. Perhaps the attempt at defence was clumsy, but it was becoming clear that the rash acceptance of the doctrine of one will by Honorius would be a major problem for the church of Rome.⁷⁸

With the welfare of his native land in mind, John despatched to Dalmatia and Istria an abbot who travelled about ransoming captives. He also ordered that the relics of martyrs were to be brought from those regions, and these, which were contact relics rather than parts of their bodies, were installed in a chapel he established in the Lateran complex, next to the baptistery built in the time of Constantine and the chapels adjacent to it for which pope Hilary had been responsible. A mosaic he installed in its apse shows a bust of Christ in the act of blessing, flanked by two angels. Beneath Him stands a praying figure of the Virgin; to her right, as seen by viewers of the mosaic, are Peter, John the Baptist, a pope, presumably John, holding a model of the church, and a group of martyrs; to her left stands Paul, John the Evangelist, another pope holding a book, presumably Theodore, who succeeded John after his brief pontificate and oversaw the completion of the work, and additional martyrs. The figures are arranged symmetrically, and it is worth noting that the two great Johns of the Christian tradition, the Baptist and the Evangelist, form one of the symmetrical pairs, just as the chapels pope Hilary built in their honour at the Lateran were positioned symmetrically. The *Liber Pontificalis* specifies that the church was erected for the martyrs Venantius, Anastasius, Maurus, and many others; those depicted in its mosaics were all victims of persecutions of the third and fourth centuries, rather than the victims of more recent events in the area. Usually an exporter of relics, Rome was in this case their recipient. The first in the list shared his name with John's father, another Dalmatian, and we can surely detect in his work a note of filial piety.⁷⁹

Whereas John had been the first pope since Symmachus to have been born outside the mainland of Italy, the origins of the next pope were yet more distant, for those of **Theodore I (24 November 642–14 May 649)** were in Jerusalem. The Persians who captured the city in 614 had been hostile to its Christian population, and Theodore may have been a refugee. His father, said to have been a bishop, had also come to Rome. Following the death of Sergius in 638, one Pyrrhos had become patriarch of Constantinople, but having fallen foul of machinations that followed the death of Heraclius, he was deposed, and on 1 October 641 a priest, Paul, was ordained to succeed him. For some reason Pyrrhos was not deprived of his liberty, and he made his way to Africa, where

in 645, in the presence of bishops and senior laity, he engaged in a debate with Maximos, a Byzantine monk who had fled to Africa when Persians invaded the Empire. One of the most eminent theologians in the history of Christianity, Maximos remained thoroughly Eastern in his orientation, despite having settled in that part of the West where the local theological traditions were strongest. At one point he gives the impression of having wavered from his Eastern convictions, for whereas the Eastern church taught that Christ proceeded 'from the Father', that in the West believed him to have proceeded 'from the Father and the Son', and Maximus seems to have been prepared to accept the latter expression, with reservations.⁸⁰ He had developed a defence of the theology of Christ having two wills that placed weight on his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.' By the end of his long disputation with Pyrrhos, which was taken down by stenographers and can still be read, the former patriarch had come to see his views as false, and he expressed a wish to go to Rome to see the pope. On arriving there he satisfied pope Theodore as to his belief. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes Pyrrhos, in the presence of the entire clergy and people, presenting a signed document in which he condemned all the things that he and his predecessors had written or done against the faith. Theodore then placed a bishop's throne next to the altar and treated him as though he were the bishop of the royal city. But the triumph was momentary. Pyrrhos went to Ravenna, the centre of imperial authority in Italy, where, in the words that our two sources independently drew from the Bible to describe the horrible reality, he returned like a dog to his vomit. Theodore did not take well to his defection. He anathematised and deposed the miscreant, signing the condemnation with ink into which had been mixed consecrated wine from the Eucharist, the very blood of Christ. Theodore proceeded to depose Paul, Pyrrhos's successor. Pyrrhos returned to the royal city where, following the death of Paul, he would later resume his duties as patriarch.⁸¹

Like his predecessor, Theodore promoted the cult of the martyrs, but those he was concerned with were local ones. He moved the bodies of two of them, Primus and Felicianus, from a cemetery on the Via Nomentana to a chapel in the church of S Stefano Rotondo, which may not have contained relics until that time. Little is known of this pair, who had received martyrdom at Mentana, just outside Rome, although they had been the subject of a Passion written in the fifth century. But whereas John IV had brought contact relics from Dalmatia into the city, by bringing the bodies of deceased people into it, perhaps in accordance with a practice he had been familiar with in the east, Theodore decisively turned his back on a venerable Roman tradition. From the time of the Twelve Tables, Roman law had prohibited the burial or burning of

bodies within the city, and the Codex of Justinian had repeated legislation banning such practices. In the apse of the chapel Theodore placed a mosaic that can still be seen. At the top is a bust of Christ, beneath whom stands a large, jewelled cross in a style that may have come from the east, beside which stand figures labelled as Primus to the left and Felicianus to the right.⁸² He further indulged his taste for obscure saints by building a church dedicated to S Valentine, a chapel in the Lateran dedicated to S Sebastian, whose name so puzzled copyists of the text which records this foundation that different ones changed it to Stephen and Silvester, and a chapel to the martyr S Euplus.⁸³

A native of the town of Todi in Umbria, **Martin I (5 July 649–17 June 653; died 16 September 655)** had served as apocrisiarius in Constantinople. He would have been well aware of the niceties involved in dealing with the emperor, but broke with convention by not troubling to inform the emperor Constans of his election. Instead, he chose to defy the emperor. Despite Constans having recently decreed, in a document called the Typos, that there was to be no further discussion of Christ's wills and energies, Martin speedily summoned a council to discuss that very subject. We have seen popes summon councils on many occasions that dealt with the conduct of church affairs, but in its concern to grapple thoroughly with a serious matter of doctrine the council over which Martin presided in 649 had much in common with the five ecumenical, or universal, councils that had been held by that time. The use of the term 'ecumenical' in this context is secular rather than Christian,⁸⁴ and the criteria according to which a council could be judged to be of ecumenical status are perhaps less self-evident than some approaches to church history assume; however, it will be worth considering the standing of Martin's council with respect to two issues, those of the summoning and location of ecumenical councils. Hitherto, only emperors had summoned them. The pattern had been set early in the fourth century, when Constantine summoned the council of Nicaea to deal with the problems caused by the teaching of Arius, and was followed by Theodosius I, Theodosius II, Marcian and Pulcheria, and Justinian when they summoned the councils of Constantinople I, Ephesos, Chalcedon, and Constantinople II, respectively. The emperor Anastasius took it for granted that this was the job of emperors, informing the pope that it had pleased his clemency that a venerable synod be held.⁸⁵ But some people thought that another mechanism was possible. Different versions of the *Liber Pontificalis* state that the council of Nicaea was held at the instruction of pope Silvester, or with his consent. Linked with this was the question of where such councils would take place. Hitherto they had all been held in the east, either in Constantinople or a town not far from the royal city, but popes did not see this as an inviolable principle. In 449 Leo and a council of bishops meeting in Rome wrote to Theodosius II asking that a general synod be held in Italy, and in 553

Vigilius had proposed to Justinian that a council be held at some place in Italy, or Sicily, to discuss the Three Chapters, which bishops from Africa and other provinces where Latin was spoken would attend. The ground for a pope summoning a council in the West had therefore been prepared, and the proceedings of the council of 649 that were published, the first council held in Rome for which documentation on such a scale was produced, were clearly modelled on the proceedings of ecumenical councils. Indeed, Martin's collaborator, Maximos the confessor, explicitly described it as the sixth council.⁸⁶ When Martin presided at the council he saw himself as doing something very serious.

On 5 October 649, 105 bishops came together at the Lateran, for the first of a series of sessions that would last across the month. It is highly likely that the proceedings of the council that have come down to us in both Greek and Latin versions are fictitious, and had been composed before it met, perhaps by Maximos, who seems to have travelled to Rome while Theodore was pope, so their value as a source for proceedings is extremely questionable. It is hard to credit Italian bishops relying as heavily on material in Greek as those attending the council are represented as having done, and pope Martin's relying on a translator when he was on trial in Constantinople a few years later suggests that his level of competence in that language was not high. Yet it is clear that the original language of the document that purports to be the proceedings of the council was Greek; the versions it supplies for quotations from the Bible in Latin, for example, are easily identifiable as translations from the Greek versions.⁸⁷ Minor differences between the texts in the two languages reflect different understandings of relations between the churches of Rome and Constantinople, so that the Greek version of a letter written by the patriarch Paul to pope Theodore addresses him as 'brother', whereas the Latin has 'father', and systematic study of such variants would be interesting.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the way of proceeding that the texts purport to describe, that of decisions being taken on the basis of a collection of earlier texts that were relevant to the issues being considered was very similar to that followed by the ecumenical council of 553, and so another indication of the ambition Martin had for his council.⁸⁹

The church derived its doctrines from the Scriptures, around which stood the writings of the fathers, the canons of the councils, and other written material. From its earliest times it had been concerned with adhering to precedent, and over time this tendency strengthened. Moreover, the texts that were held in such high regard were increasingly accessed through collections of excerpts. Just as Augustine could be approached in a collection of passages prepared by Eugippius, and Gregory's works by the portions anthologised by the notary Paterius or the Irish monk Lathcen, excerpts from various fathers bearing on a

point of doctrine had been collected by Leo I and appended to a letter he sent to an emperor. In a similar fashion, the Lateran council considered extracts from the fathers, just as the ecumenical council held in 553 did and those held in 680/681 and 787 would. But it was a risky procedure, for the content of texts was not as stable as it is now. Since the 15th century it has been possible for large numbers of identical copies of a text to be printed, but in earlier times documents were transmitted in individually copied manuscripts, each liable to contain errors that may have been introduced accidentally or deliberately. Among the acclamations with which members of the senate greeted the publication of the Theodosian Code in the fifth century were pleas to have many copies made to prevent laws being interpolated, to have them kept under seals in public repositories, and, most revealingly, for copies to be written in a way that filled all the available space, to prevent interpolations. Even texts of the Bible could not be trusted: Had Job really said 'I know that my redeemer liveth.'⁹⁰

Whereas the proceedings of each ecumenical council were authoritative for those that followed them, they could be particularly problematic. Pope Gregory I, for example, writing on behalf of Pelagius II, argued that many old Greek manuscripts of the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon showed that it had six, rather than seven, sessions, presumably attempting to wriggle out of a passage at its end that gave an uncomfortably high position to the church of Constantinople. Writing to a layman in the royal city, Gregory expressed himself more freely, complaining that the church of Constantinople had falsified the proceedings of the council of Constantinople at one point, and it had done the same to those of the council of Ephesos. The pope asked his correspondent to seek out old manuscripts of the council of Chalcedon and send any he found to Rome, which would be returned as soon as the pope had read them. Gregory laid down two principles which he felt readers of manuscripts should bear in mind, neither of them entirely sound: Recent manuscripts were not to be trusted, and Roman manuscripts were much more reliable than Greek ones, for whereas Romans did not have the shrewdness of the Greeks, they did not have their deceitfulness. But such principles were of no use in dealing with the productions of an evil monk who altered the text of a letter the bishop of Thessaloniki had sent to Gregory, and tried to pass off works of his own as having been written by Gregory I. Some people said that the passage in Honorius's letter to Sergius in which he accepted that Christ had one will had been inserted by those who translated it into Greek. At the third council of Constantinople held in 680 passages were read out in which pope Vigilius expressed the view that there had been one person and one operation in Christ. The teaching was clearly heretical, and it was later claimed that the offending passages had been interpolated, although it has recently

been argued that the evidence for their having been inserted had itself been planted, and that Vigilius had indeed believed these things. In a world governed by texts, their unreliability was a constant concern.⁹¹

Given the absences of the bishops of Milan and Ravenna, the latter allegedly busy with things needing to be done, Maximus, the bishop of Aquileia, and Deusdedit, the bishop of the Sardinian see of Cagiliari, took prominent roles in the council. Its participants attacked the two troubling documents that emperors had issued, the Ekthesis of Heraclius prescribing the doctrine of one will and the Typos of Constans that forbade discussion of such matters, but in both cases sought to save the honour of the emperors, for they asserted that the Ekthesis had been written by the patriarch Sergius in the name of Heraclius and that the Typos was not the product of the work and intention of Constans II but the rude and false advice of the patriarch Paul. The concern of the participants to protect the good names of the emperors is a striking indication of the church of Rome maintaining its loyalty to the Empire. In the same fashion, the *Liber Pontificalis* places the issuing of the Typos within the context of the pride and evil behaviour of the patriarch Paul, and sees him as having induced the emperor to issue it. Having fully considered the evidence, the council affirmed that there were two wills in Christ, and consigned pope Honorius to a sad place among those who had falsely taught that he had had only one.⁹²

Martin was zealous in publicising the decisions of the council. A letter drawn up in his name and those of the bishops who attended it was certainly intended for a wide readership, for it was addressed to bishops, priests, deacons, abbots, monks, those living chastely, the whole Catholic church, and, beyond this, what was described as the holy fullness. Letters from Martin concerning the council found their way to Arabia, Carthage, and various destinations in western Europe. He urged bishop Amandus of Trier to ask the Frankish king Sigibert to send to Rome bishops who would convey the proceedings of the council of 649 to the emperor on behalf of the apostolic see and in this way participate in its labours, a procedure that suggests that Martin was keen to avoid direct contact with Constantinople. But before long he had sent the emperor Constans a copy of the proceedings of the council, in Greek as well as Latin, with encouragement to turn away from the heresy of the Monothelites.⁹³ The council would be acknowledged by the bishops who met at a council in England 30 years later. Having stated that they received the five universal synods, they went on to state that they also received the synod held in Rome in the time of Martin, asserting that they glorified Christ as those synods had, anathematising those they had anathematised, and receiving those they had received. In their eyes, Martin's council seems to have had a quasi-ecumenical status. In Rome itself, Martin commissioned rich decorations in the

church of Sta Maria Antiqua that included roughly life-size portraits of four fathers of the church, Leo, Gregory of Nazianzos, Basil, and John Chrysostom. Each was shown holding a scroll containing words he had written that were quoted at the council. Whereas such visual propaganda would only be fully appreciated by those who could read Greek, it gave powerful expression to the rightness of Martin's cause and, by implication, the falsity of that of the emperor.⁹⁴

But it was not a good time to have defied Constans. When news of the election of Martin reached Constantinople, a new exarch, Olympios, was sent directly to Rome, with clear instructions as to how to deal with the situation: The bishops and other church officials were to sign copies of the Typos, and if that portion of the army that was stationed in Rome could be prevailed upon to do so, it was to arrest Martin. The orders given to Olympios describe Martin as the former *apocrisiarius*, from which we may deduce that his election as pope was not recognised in Constantinople. If the local army refused to cooperate, Olympios was to bide his time until he was able to bring together the entire army. But he arrived in Rome to find the Lateran council was in session, and could not make headway in the face of united opposition. He was said to have then arranged for Martin to be killed while giving him communion, only to be foiled when the officer who was to carry out the act was struck blind. This story sounds legendary, and from that point it is hard to establish what became of the exarch, although there is reason to believe that he was reconciled with Martin. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he gathered an army and set off for Sicily to deal with the Saracens who were living there, but the Roman army did very badly, and he died of disease.⁹⁵

Whatever the fate of Olympios may have been, he had failed to achieve what the emperor had hoped he would. A new exarch, Theodore Calliopas, was sent to Italy, and on 17 June 653, having made his way into the cathedral with a force of troops, he arrested Martin on the grounds of illegally snatching the position of bishop. Two days later, towards the middle of the night, the pope was bundled out of the city, and on the following day set sail for Constantinople. Having been harshly treated during the voyage he was ill by the time he arrived there on 17 September. The emperor was absent at the time, so Martin was held in solitary confinement until 20 December, when he was carried on a litter to be tried before the senate, on the charge of having plotted rebellion with Olympios. Doubtless Constans had reasons other than this for wanting Martin out of the way, but chose to act against him on grounds that were simply political. When Martin tried to raise the question of the Typos, he was told that the faith was irrelevant, for he was being charged with sedition. In the same way, when the emperor Leo III wished to depose a patriarch who opposed his policy of doing away with icons some 80 years later, he attempted

to set the patriarch up so that the man could be found guilty of treason. After witnesses had testified against Martin, who is represented in an early account as behaving like Christ before the Sanhedrin, one of a number of ways in which the author of the account was concerned to show that Martin's ordeal was similar to the passion of Christ, the presiding officer consulted with the emperor, and Martin, having been found guilty, was subjected to public humiliation. He was stripped of his pallium, the outermost of the vestments worn by a pope, and the laces of his special boots that were specific to popes were cut; pope John VII can be seen wearing such boots in a mosaic of the early eighth century. Having been dragged bleeding through the streets in heavy chains he was cast into a prison, from which he would emerge after 85 days to be exiled to Cherson, on the Crimean peninsula. He arrived there in May 654 to endure pitiable circumstances, in the midst of which he wrote to Rome complaining of not being able to buy food and asking for some to be sent to him. But in August a new pope was ordained, and there was little to hope for. On 16 September 655 Martin died, on the feast of S Euphemia, the martyr always held in high regard by the supporters of the council of Chalcedon. He was buried just outside Cherson, in a church dedicated to S Mary. Just over 100 years earlier, when pope Agapetus had died in the royal city, his body was sent back to Rome, but on this occasion the authorities were taking no chances. He quickly became known as a confessor, one who endured suffering for Christ. Miracles were quickly attributed to him, and some of his belongings were distributed as relics. His collaborator Maximos, who would later be arrested and, after a trial similar to that of Martin, died in exile in 662, is to this day known as Maximos the Confessor.⁹⁶

The image of the exhausted figure of Martin being stripped of his vestments before a crowd is unforgettable. His humiliation recalled that of pope Silverius just over 100 years earlier, but it had been within the privacy of a palace that the earlier pope had been stripped of his clothing. The violent and public removal from Martin of the clothes that denoted his status as pope was a most dramatic indication that he had lost his office, for the society of late antiquity placed far more emphasis than does ours on visible markers of status, such as the right to wear a pallium; even such a small matter as the deacons in Catania taking to wearing boots could lead a pope to fear that the whole order of ecclesiastical strength was being thrown into confusion. In the mosaics commissioned by popes they are invariably portrayed clad in their formal garb of office, and the dedicatory inscription pope Honorius placed beneath the mosaic he had installed in S Agnes draws attention to the clothing he was shown wearing. A few decades later, the defeat of bishop Macarius of Antioch in a synod was marked by a bishop removing his stole on the orders of the emperor. The indignities experienced by Silverius and Martin, like that of

Macarius, were inflicted by people acting on behalf of an emperor or empress; only late in the eighth century, when the Roman church was no longer subject to imperial sway, would Constantine, a pretender to papal office, be stripped of his stole and have his boots cut at the behest of a body of clergy, prior to having his eyes gouged out and being committed to a monastery for the rest of his life. But even in a society that took violence in its stride, the figure of Martin enduring his agony in silence was a terrifying testimony as to what an emperor could do.⁹⁷

Notes

- 1 Ep. 3. 51, 52, 65, but no surviving letter to a member of the royal family mentions his coming.
- 2 One letter: Gregory, ep. 5.45, surprisingly critical. Return to Rome: Gregory, ep. 7.23–5, 29, 31, with ep. 8.6 on his assistant Peter.
- 3 Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 315 n. 5. *Plebs omnis* choose Gregory: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1. Peace with Lombards: Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.32; *LP*, 67.1 mentions the peace but does not assign credit. King of all Italy: Classen (1981): 920.
- 4 Plautus, *Capt*, 883; Juvenal, 3.224.
- 5 *PLRE* 2, pp. 265f, 126, 681.
- 6 Boniface's council: *LP*, 68.2.
- 7 Deposition: Gregory, ep. 2.1. Decree: ep. 5.57a; note, however, that the passage immediately following transfers the job of attending to the pope in private from boys to priests and monks. Filled the church: *LP*, 67.2. S Pancras: Gregory, ep. 4.18, with *hom ev*, 27. On Gregory and the deacons, Pietri (1986): 111f.
- 8 *LP*, 51.2 (Gelasius; see further his frag 36f (ed. Thiel, p. 501f), 57.3 (Boniface II, with his epitaph in Duchesne's edn of *LP*, p. 283 n. 14 l.19), 60.5 (Silverius, with an alarming report of conditions in Liguria), 61.4, 7 (Vigilius), 64.1 (Benedict I), 69.1 (Boniface IV). Note too three years of hunger when Constantine was pope: *LP*, 90.1. State official: Cassiodorus, *var*. 6.18 (the Paschasius to whom 12.9 was addressed seems to be the last known holder of the office); cf Gelasius, ep. 14.27 (ed. Thiel, p. 378). Datius of Milan: *ibid*. 12.27. Tension: Gregory I, ep. 9.116. Vigilius leaves: *LP*, 61.4.
- 9 Causes of famine: Paul the deacon, *hist. lang.*, 4.29. Sabinianus: *LP*, 67.1; the granaries are known to have lost thousands of modii in floods shortly before Gregory became pope (Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1). Constantinople: *Paschal Chronicle*, 618. Whereas it was a sign of prosperity of Theoderic's reign that a solidus bought 60 modii (Anonymous Valesianus 73, *MGH AA* 9: 324), in hard times during the 530s grain was sold from state stores at 25 modii or 20 modii (millet in the latter case) for a solidus (Cassiodorus, *var*, 10.27, 12.27); by these standards, Sabinianus's price was reasonable. Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 315 n. 5, line 3. Responses to famine: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 4.69; Paul the deacon, *V Greg*, 29 (*PL* 75: 58); *LPR* similarly uses the famine to compare Sabinianus with

- Gregory, to the disadvantage of the former (102). Route: *LP*, 67.2.
- 10 Boniface: *LP*, 68.1. Much of what follows involves untangling the different Bonifaces mentioned in Gregory's letters, an issue discussed by Hartmann (*MGH Ep* 2: 287 n. 2).
 - 11 Boniface as *defensor ecclesiae*: Gregory, ep. 1.25f, cf 5.40. *Primus defensor*: 8.16. Roman *defensor civitatis*: *cod theod*, 1.29, with Cassiodorus, *var*, 7.11. Complaint: Cassiodorus, *var*, 9.15. Activities of defenders: Pelagius I, ep. 27; cf Justinian, *nov*, 15. Interests of church: Gregory I, ep. 5.26, 8.16, 9.97. Monk: Pelagius, ep. 12. Mentions: Gregory I, ep. 3.36; 7.13, 20; 8.8; 9.110; 13. 47, 49f. Unscrupulous people: *ibid*, 1.68, 9.22. Children: *ibid*, 3.21.
 - 12 Gregory to Phocas: ep. 13.34. Mission in Constantinople: 13.41, 43 (13.45 to the patriarch of Alexandria mentions news Gregory had earlier had of him through Boniface). Trust in Boniface: ep. 14.8.
 - 13 *LP*, 68.1, expressed slightly differently in Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.36.
 - 14 *LP*, 69, with ed. Duchesene, p. 318 n.4 for the epitaph; that for Boniface III does not mention Gregory (p. 316 n. 3) Belisarius: *LP*, 61.2. Cassiodorus: *inst div litt*, 29. Liberius: Fentress et al. (2005); he also constructed a basilica in Orange (*CCSL* 148A: 55). John: Gregory I, ep. 6.42; the arrangements made by a bishop of Luni for a convent founded in his house give an idea of the provisions that needed to be made: Gregory, ep. 8.5. Fifth century: *LP*, 46.7 (Sixtus III), 47.7 (Leo), 48.12 (Hilary). Gregory: above, p. 113. Gregory's aunts: *dial*. 4.17, *hom ev* 38.15 (*CCSL* 141: 374). Boniface: *LP*, 69.3. Honorius: *LP*, 72.6.
 - 15 *LP*, 69.2; Bede, *chron*, 536 (*MGH AA* 13: 310), *HE*, 2.4. Had become known as: Macrobius, *sat*. 3.17.18. The best discussion is De Blaauw (1994b).
 - 16 Statue: *CIL* 6: 1200. Sant'Agata dei Goti: Gregory, ep. 4.19 (a cave) and *dial*, 3.30, with which compare 2.8.11f and 3.7. Sebastian: Gregory, *dial*, 1.10.2 Late eighth century: *MGH Ep* 5:50. Boniface: Bede, *HE*, 2.4. (ad fin).
 - 17 Gregory to Æthelberht: ep. 11.37; to Mellitus: ep. 11.56, reproduced by Bede, *HE*, 1.30, and oddly foreshadowed by Augustine, ep. 29.9 (*PL* 33: 118f). In general, Wallraff (2004).
 - 18 Marcian: Nicephoros Callistos, *HE*, 14 (*PG* 147: 44f). Bishop: *V Wilfridi*, 56 (*MGH SRM* 6: 251f).
 - 19 Sta Maria Maggiore: *LP*, 48.1. Manichaeans: *LP*, 51.1 (Sta Maria Maggiore); 53.5, 54.9 (cathedral). Blachernai: Janin (1969): 161. Ravenna: *LPR*, 57. Justinian: Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.3.1–10; a shrine of the Virgin at Ceuta could be represented as dedicating to her the threshold of the Empire (*ibid* 6.7.16). *Cod. iust.* 1.27.9 mentions Mary's prayers. Seventh century: *LP*, 76.6. Interpolations: *LP* 48.1, 69.2.
 - 20 Gregory, *hom*, 8 (*CCSL* 141: 53.22f). Early council: *MGH AA* 12: 411–14 (signatures 7, 28, 51). Council of 595: Peter, *presbyter tituli S Iulii et Callisti* (*MGH Ep* 2: 376.5), with which compare a description of Boniface, *lector tituli sanctae Mariae* (*MGH Ep* 2: 438.42); late in the eighth century pope Hadrian restored what was described as the titulus of Mary, also known as that of Calistus, in Trastevere (*LP*, 97.79). Brandenburg (2005): 112f discusses the confusing early history of the church, while misdating the renaming in honour of Mary.
 - 21 Icon: Bertelli (1961). One version of the *LP* credits Boniface with placing relics in the church (69.2, ed. Mommsen), but is not to be followed.
 - 22 *LP*, 70.1, with the epitaph on p. 320 n. 7. Two priests named Deusdedit had attended a Roman synod in 595, and one five years later (*MGH Ep* 1: 367.1f; 2: 275. 12).
 - 23 *LP*, 66.5, 67.2, 70.4, 71.3. Epiphanius: Ennodius, *V Epi* 8, 18, 20 (*MGH AA* 7: 85–7), with *PL*

- 67: 1033 on the eight-year-old. The significance of the stipend (*roga*; *LP*, 70.20) is unclear; Gregory had used the word for a payment made to soldiers (as at *ep.* 2.45, 5.30).
- 24 Predecessor: *LP*, 70.1. Lombards: *auct haun ext*, 21f (*MGH AA* 9: 339).
- 25 Heraclius: Theophanes, 6101f. Gregory: *ibid*, 6139. Eleutherius: *LPR*, 106; *LP*, 70.2, 71.2; Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.34. One source: *Auct havn ext* 23 (*MGH AA* 9: 339; *ubi imperii solium maneret* is difficult.) The term *adsumpsit regnum* is used at *LP*, 71.2, but note that different versions of this text treat *regnus* as a synonym for *corona aurea* (ed. Mommsen, p. 130.21); cf the *regnus cum gemmis praetiosius* sent to S Peter by Clovis (*LP*, 54.10) and the expression *cum regno in capite* (*LP*, 90.6). Constans: Theophanes, 6153. Role of the patriarch: Winkelmann (1978).
- 26 *LP*, 71, with Gregory, *dial*, 3.20.1; Duchesne's edition of the *LP* provides his epitaph, p. 322 n. 8.
- 27 Bede, *HE*, 2.8, 2.10f; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, 296.
- 28 As does Kelly (2010): 67.
- 29 For the popes from Felix III, Moorhead (2006): 285 n. 34; note earlier the cases of Leo and Hilary (e.g. *MGH AA* 9: 478 and *PL* 54: 781f, respectively).
- 30 Silvester: *LP*, 34.8. Justinian: *nov.* 123.13. Later popes: Siricius, *ep.* 1.9f (*LP*, 13: 1141); Zosimus, *ep.* 9.3 (*PL* 20: 672f); cf the case of Cato of Clermont-Ferrand, Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 4.6. Constantinople: John the Lydian, *mag.* 2.18.3.
- 31 Photius, *bibl.* 183, referring to Navatus rather than Novatian. *Vicarius pontificis: Ordines Romani* 1: 68.10. Standard letters: *Liber Diurnus*, p. 112, with subscriptions, p. 113, and following letters.
- 32 Constantinople: Janin (1969): 469 on the cathedral, 170 on the church at Blachernai. Ravenna: *LPR*, 60.
- 33 Third century: Eusebius, *HE*, 6.43. Sixtus: *LP*, 25.2f, naming six deacons and the archdeacon Laurence; see too Sozomen, *HE*, 7.19. Peter: *LP*, 1.6. Fabian: *LP*, 21.2. See further Dogmalski (1997) and Moorhead (2006).
- 34 Ennodius, *ep.* 4.34 (first letter to Hormisdas), 6.33, 7.28, 8.33, 8.39 (for the last two references, *MGH AA* 7: 287.11, 290.26); I follow the dates assigned to the letters by Sundwall (1919). Dioscorus: *LP*, 57.1.
- 35 *Apostolic Constitutions*: 2.30 (*SChr* 320: 248–50). Membership of *familia*: Gregory I, *ep.* 1.42; note however that the term is used in a broader sense at *ep.* 5.57a, c. vi. Gregory I frequently describes deacons as his sons, as at *ep.* 1. 42, 3.31, 3.57, and even 'our most dearly beloved son... the deacon' (*ep.* 5.28). Gregory of Tours writes of *diaconus noster: lib hist*, 10.1. Hymn: Ambrose, *hymne*, 13.7. Augustine: tract in Ioh 27.12 (*CCSL* 36: 276); similar language occurs in the *Passio Polychronii*. Childhood: *a primaevo iuventutis flore in amicitiiis familiariter obstrictus* (*dial*, 1 prol.2). Saxer describes deacons as living with the pope in his residence (2001): 524. Embassy: *LP*, 54.2; cf 54.5.
- 36 Councils: Arles, c. 18 (*CCSL* 148: 13); Nicaea (c. 18, ed. Alberigo et al., p. 29). Later councils: e.g. Arles (442–506), c. 15 (*CCSL* 148: 117); Agde (506), c. 1 (*CCSL* 148: 193); Trullo (692), c. 7 (ed. Alberigo et al., p. 234f).
- 37 Gallic text: (*Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* 2, 12, 57, 59 (ed. *CCSL* 148: 164ff). Jerome: *ep.* 146 (*PL* 22: 1083). Gelasius: *ep.* 14. 8 (ed. Thiel, p.366). Councils: e.g. *MGH AA* 12: 401 (priests sitting), 401 (deacons standing). Arrogance: 'Ambrosiaster', *quaest* 101 (*PL* 35: 2305–7).

- 38 Career structures: Pietri (1976): 690–96, with 708–18. Eulalius and Boniface: above, p. 50. 687: *LP*, 86.2.
- 39 Leo: *tract.* 85.2. Nauroy (1989) discusses traditions about Laurence.
- 40 Ambrose, *off* 1.41.205 (the sacrifice referred to is that of the Eucharist); Prudentius, *peristeph*, 2.37f (*CCSL* 126: 258). Isidore: *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, 2.8.3f (*CCSL* 113: 67). First time: *LP*, 6.2; I take this to refer to preaching, as at 1.3 prayer and preaching to the people, clearly following Acts 6:4, prayer and the ministry of the word. Specific functions: Augustine, *ep.* 55 18 (*PL* 33: 221); Justin Martyr, *I Apol* 65, 67; Cyprian, *de lapsis*, 25 (*CCSL* 3: 235). Papal mass: see below, p. 282f. Leo: *Tract.* 48.1 (*CCSL* 138: 279). Gregory: *ep.* 5.53a.
- 41 Mosaic: above, p. 112. Story: *Passio Polychronii*, 21f. Gregory I describes a deacon as the *dispensator* of the church (*dial* 3.20.1). Gelasius: frag. 23, ed. Thiel, p. 496f.
- 42 Pseudo-Isidore: ed. Reynolds, p. 261. Laurence: Ambrose, *hymne*, 13.24; cf *off*, 2.28.140 (*SAEMO* 13: 262). Mosaic: Brandenburg (2005): 237. On *industria*, Sidonius Apollinaris *ep.* 4.25. Deacons elect: Jerome, *ep.* 125.15, but cf council of Agde, can. 23 (*CCSL* 148: 203f), and the case of Leudegar, *Passio* I.2 and *Passio* II. 2 (*MGH SRM* 5: 283, 325); further, Amanieu (1935): 950, on the basis of eastern evidence. Secular offices: Cassiodorus, *var.*, 6.18.2, 7; 7.17.2; 3.16.1; 3.17.2; 7.4.4.
- 43 *Dial*: pref, 1–6. Peter's career: Gregory, *ep.* 6.24, 1.1, 3.1. Letters: *ep.* 1.3–7.
- 44 John: above, p. 65f. Pelagius I: *PL* 67: 1170A, and above, p. 100. John III: above, p. 105. Gregory: *LP*, 91.1.
- 45 Hilary, *ep* 2f (ed. Thiel).
- 46 Acolyte: Augustine, *ep.* 191.1; *PL* 33: 867. Bishop in Syria: Theodoret, *ep.* 118 (*PG* 83: 1328). Leo in 440: Prosper Tiro, *epit. chron.* 1341 (*MGH AA* 9: 478). Hilary: Prosper Tiro, *epit. chron.* 1358 (*MGH AA* 9: 480) describes him as acting *vice sancti papae Leonis*. 'Our deacon': Gregory I, *ep.* 8.4 (*MGH Ep* 2: 6). John: *LP*, 84.2, with his epitaph, *LP* ed. Duchesne, p. 367, n. 7, line 5f.
- 47 Letter: Hormisdas, *ep.* 50.4 (ed. Thiel, p. 843). Members of legation: *LP*, 54.5 (ed. Mommsen, p. 128). Germanus: Gregory, *dial.*, 2.35.3, 4.8, 4.42.3f. Decisive meeting: *LP*, ed. Mommsen, p. 260.
- 48 Emperor: Constantine IV, *PL* 96: 393. Fourth century: Lizzi (1989): 38f.
- 49 Gelasius: Koch (1935). Pelagius: Ertl (1938). Gregory: Paul the deacon, *hist lang.* 3.20 (*MGH SRLI* 103), with Meyvaert (1995), identifying the letter with that published in *MGH Ep* 2: 449–67. Boniface: Gregory, *ep.* 1.50, 4.2, 6.31 (*MGH Ep* 1: 76, 233, 410); note that pope Boniface came from the city of Valeria (*LP*, 69.1), and Gregory describes someone from the province of Valeria as being closely related to his deacon Boniface (*dial.* 3.20.1). Jerome: *apol.* 2.20 (*CCSL* 79: 56).
- 50 Three addresses: *CCSL* 9: 351–63.
- 51 Lucius: *LP*, 23.4. Sixtus: *Passio Polichronii*, 13. Vigilius: above, p. 88. John IV: Bede, *HE*, 2.19. Martin: *ep.* 15 (*PL* 87: 201). Constantine II: *LP*, 90.4.
- 52 So Sessa (2012): 103f, with whom cf Schäfer (1991): 216 with n. 27. But it is a long shot to see Boniface I, who became pope in 530, as a son of the non-Catholic who had been consul in 437 (*PLRE* 1: 1010, s.v. 'Sigisvultus'), and whatever eminence Hormisdas enjoyed in his hometown would have counted for little in Rome.

- 53 Nāf (1995). Council of Orange: *CCSL* 148A: 65 (manuscripts are not concordant); *PLRE* 3: 911, 964f (Namatius, Pantagathus 2).
- 54 Leo: *tract.* 3.1, taking *rectores* as ‘bishops’. Ravenna: *LPR*, 60. Civil service: Jones (1964): 590–92. Recent suggestion: Hillner (2006): 66. Hormisdas: *coll avel* 175 (p. 631,20–22); cf Suetonius, *dom.* 4.2; Justinian, *nov.* 8 pr 1; Gregory of Tours, *lib hist.* 8.18.
- 55 Chalcedon: c 2, ed. Albergo et al., p. 138. Constantinople: *PG* 86: 2300f. Pelagius: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 304 n. 7, l. 13f (cf *LP*, 62.2). Gregory: Markus (1997): 171–74. Symmachus: above, p. 000. Constantine: *LP*, 96.5. Leo: *LP* 47.9 (I am more confident of the value of this material than Davis, in his translation of the *LP* (2000): xxi) and 49.5 on Simplicius. Story: John Moschus, *prat spir* 149 (*PG* 87: 1328). Byzantine law: Justinian, *nov.* 123.16.
- 56 *LP*, 72.1. Attempt to gain consulate: Gregory I, ep. 2.36; cf Bavant (1979): 70f. Eighth century: *Liber Censuum*, p. 353, nos. 65, 70; see in general Brown (1984): 137ff. Domus Venticiliana: Coates-Stephens (1996): 246 n. 16. Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 326 n. 19.19f. English author: Bede, *HE*, 5.19 (ed. Plummer, p. 323). Possible use of private wealth: Llewellyn (1971): 94.
- 57 *LP*, 72.1f, with 86.11 on the great royal silver doors. Hagia Sophia: Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *Book of Ceremonies*, e.g. pp. 14, 28, 30, and esp. 88; I am grateful to Ann Moffatt for help in this matter.
- 58 Eight churches: *LP*, 72.3–6. Blachernai: Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.3.3, but cf Janin (1969): 161f. With *LP*, 72.5, cf Duchesne’s n. 16.
- 59 On the name Agnes, plausibly to be derived from the Greek ἄγνη, see Ambrose, *De virginitate*, 1.2.5, but cf Augustine: *Agnes latine agnam significat graece castram: serm.* 283.6 (*PL* 38: 1250). Earlier church: Brandenburg (2005): 69–86. Serena: A.M. Giuntella, in Pani Ermini (2000): 178, with *LP*, 98.80. Honorius’s church, Brandenburg (2005): 240–47; Caillet (2011): 161f. Prudentius: *Peristef.* 14: 96–105 (*CCSL* 126: 388f). For the second pope being Gregory, rather than Symmachus, Wollasch (2002).
- 60 Other projects: *PL*, 72.4–6, with Gregory I, ep. 3.19; see further Brandenburg (2005): 232 on S Adraiano. Later, pope Gregory II would give the priest Lupicinus two monasteries, one dedicated to Leo and the other to Severinus (*Liber Censuum*, p. 350 no. 37).
- 61 *LP*, 72.3f, with 42.3 on Innocent’s foundation. Oddly enough, the church of Gervasius and Protasius was later renamed after S Vitale, another figure from Ravenna. The church of Milan returned the favour; Bishop Laurence restored a basilica dedicated to pope Sixtus (Ennodius, *carm* 2.8). S Apollinare in Classe: *LPR*, 63, 77. Burials in Ravenna: *LPR*, 98 (that of John I, who died in 595), and thereafter 103, 104, 107 for bishops up to Honorius’s time. Oaths: *LP*, 57.3; Gregory I, ep. 7.18, with 6.19 on prayers.
- 62 *MGH Ep* 3: 695f; *Chron patr grad* 6 (*MGH SRLI* 394); if the following passage is to be believed, Primogenius succeeded in obtaining financial help from the emperor. Epitaph: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 325, 1st inscr, lines 13–20, counting 70 years from the ordination of Paulinus of Aquileia. Runaway monk: *MGH Ep* 3: 696.
- 63 *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 326, n. 19, l.11f.
- 64 Philo, *leg.* 23.155f.
- 65 Disloyalty: *tract.* 69.4. Blindness: *tract.* 35.1f, 56.2, 57.1. Attila: Symmachus, ep. 12.8 (ed. Thiel, p. 714). Inducements: Gregory, ep. 5.7 (Manichaeans, on the other hand, were to be vigorously pursued.) Events of 565: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist.* 5.11; Venantius Fortunatus,

- car*, 5.5 (MGH AA 4). Marseilles: Gregory, ep. 1.45. Naples: ep. 13. 15 (Procopius, *Wars*, 5.8.41, 10.24–26 suggests a strong Jewish community there.) End of world: *mor*, 35.14.26–34 (CCSL 143B: 1790–97; admittedly, Gregory believed that the end of the world may have been imminent.) See further Dumézil (2005): 113f.
- 66 Heraclius: Dagron and Déroche (2010): 28–32. Justinian: *nov*, 37.8. Earlier emperors: see for Constantinople Theophanes, 5942, 6069, and for Africa Justinian, *nov*, 37.8. Left in peace: *cod iust*, 1.11.6. Jew in Carthage: *Doctrina Iacobi*, summarised by Jones (1964): 316f. Dagobert: Fredegarius, *chron*. 4.65 (MGH SRM 2: 153). Charibert: MGH *Poetae* 4: 728. Spain: Braulio, ep. 21 (*PL* 80: 669). Same laws: *const prag*, 11. Gregory: Markus (1997): 78, summarising a complex body of material.
- 67 *PL* 80: 473; see in general Meyendorff (1989): 336–56.
- 68 Heraclius disavows: *PG* 90: 125. Attempt: Alexakis (1997).
- 69 *LP*, 73.
- 70 Bede, *HE*, 5.23.
- 71 Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 6.46; cf 4.16, 9.30.
- 72 *Année épigraphique* 1973, no. 245 (p. 66).
- 73 Selection of bishop: *Liber Diurnus*, p. 115; consuls and *duces* participated in the election, p. 118. Ravenna: *LPR*, 71; Gregory I, ep. 7.42. The status of Ravenna as the headquarters of the exarch makes such a military presence easy to understand.
- 74 Metaphors: *LP*, ed. Duchese, pp. 314 (Gregory is *Dei consul*), 325, 1st inscription (Honorius is *dux plebis*). Yet Gregory had complained about being pay-master of the troops: ep. 5.39.
- 75 Adaloald's policies: Fredegar, *chron*, 4.49; Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.41. Honorius's letter: MGH *Ep* 3: 694. Murder of enemies: Fredegar, *chron*, 4.69. Rebellion of Maurice and death of Isaac: *LP*, 75.1f.
- 76 Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.47 (with 4.42 on 'Arian'). Fredegarius *chron* 4.71 suggests more violent warfare; see further on Rothari below, p. 246. John the Baptist: Paul, *hist lang*, 4.47; John's intercession on behalf of the Lombards is mentioned at 5.6.
- 77 *LP*, 74.1, with Gregory I, ep. 9.54, on another *scholasticus*.
- 78 Leo: *tract*, 56.2. Synod: Theophanes, 6121, with Mansi 10: 608f. Letter: *PL* 80: 603–6, transmitted in the form of a translation into Latin of a translation into Greek of the lost Latin original.
- 79 *LP*, 74.1f; Mackie (2003): 212–30; Caillet (2011): 162f. The relics are described as *reliquiae*. The art: Brandenburg (2005): 54, following a partial reproduction.
- 80 *PG* 91: 133–36. Despite having received the imprimatur of Augustine, the *filioque* was not always asserted in the West: e.g. *Gesta Liberii papae* (*PL* 8: 1389A). A document African bishops presented to the Vandal king Huneric describes the Spirit as proceeding from the Father alone, to the confusion of later copyists of the text (Victor of Vita, *hist pers*, 2.56, with Lancel's n. 233).
- 81 Theodore: *LP*, 75. Debate: *PG* 91: 288–353. Theophanes, *chron. a.m.* 6121; *LP*, 75.3, 6 (for the biblical words, 2 Pet: 2: 22.)
- 82 *LP*, 75.4; Mackie (2003): 75–7 is very helpful. *Passio*: Lanéry, in Philippart (2010): 246–50. Roman law: Cicero, *leg*, 2.23.58 quotes from the Twelve Tables; cf *cod iust* 3.44.12.

- 83 *LP*, 75.5.
- 84 Chadwick (1972).
- 85 *Coll avel*, 109 (p. 501f).
- 86 *Liber Pontificalis*: 34.4. Procedure: Caspar (1932). Leo: ep. 44.3 (extant in different versions.) Vigilius: *Collectio Avellana* 83.20 (CSEL 35: 234). Maximus: In a letter printed in *PG* 91: 137.
- 87 Riedinger (1977), (1982), (1985); but see Conte (1989) on Maximus. Use of translator: Neil, p. 198.
- 88 *ACO* n.s.1, 205.
- 89 Alexakis (1996): 16–21.
- 90 Gray (1989) discusses florilegia of proof texts. Leo: ep. 58. Theodosian Code: *cod theod*, p. 3. Job: Gregory, ep. 12.6.
- 91 Chalcedon: *MGH Ep* 2: 463f. Councils: ep. 6.14. Evil monk: Gregory, ep. 11.55. Honorius's letter: *PL* 129: 517C. Vigilius's views: *Acts of the Council of Constantinople* 1, p. 106f.
- 92 Ekthesis: e.g. pp. 151, 157; Heraclius was known to have been a heretic in the West (Fredegar, *chron*, 4.66, identifying him as a Eutychian). Typos: pp. 55, 211. *LP*: 76.1. Honorius: p. 202.
- 93 Letter: *PL* 87: 120f. Duchesne summarises the evidence for widespread distribution, in his edn of *LP*, p. 339, n.5. Amandus: ep. 2, *PL* 87: 138. Con-stans: ep. 3, *PL* 87: 138–45.
- 94 England: Bede, *HE*, 4.15 (17). Rome: Ó Carragáin (2005): 229.
- 95 *LP*, 76.5–7, with Neil, p. 170. A Saracen raid on Syracuse during the 670s is mentioned at 79.3; cf Theophanes, *chron*, 6155.
- 96 Texts in Neil, with *LP*, 76.8. Leo III: Theophanes, 6221.
- 97 Catania: Gregory I, ep. 8.27. Honorius: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 325 n.9, l. 11. Macarius: *LP*, 81.13; note as well Euphemios of Constantine (Theophanes, 5989). Papal vestments are described in *Ord rom* 8 (ed. Andrieu 1: 321). Constantine: *LP*, 96.13f; as in the case of Silverius, the deed was carried out by a subdeacon.

As pope Martin languished in exile, **Eugenius (10 August 654–2 June 657)** was ordained. This created a situation of some delicacy, for just as there had been in the days of Silverius and Vigilius there were now two men with a claim to be pope. The awkwardness is reflected in the failure of the *Liber Pontificalis* to indicate the length of a vacancy between Martin and Eugenius, and in the wildly aberrant estimates of it copyists later added to the text. The first pope since Severinus to have been born in Rome, Eugenius's name, like that of his father, Rufianus, suggests a traditional background. But he had been a member of the clergy from his infancy, and was known for being kind, mild, gentle, friendly towards all, and remarkably holy. He was certainly a friend of the clergy, for on the very day he died he ordered that a full stipend was to be paid to them, as well as to the needy and the members of his household. Such qualities may have recommended him to the authorities as someone who was unlikely to cause trouble after the recent disaster, and the example of Martin was a powerful argument for acquiescing to the policies of Constans. But feelings in Rome were strong. The customary synodical letter that Peter, who succeeded Pyrrhos as patriarch of Constantinople in 655, sent to Rome used evasive theological language and was silent concerning the burning question of Christ's operations or wills. The people and clergy refused to accept it, and would not allow Eugenius to celebrate mass in the church of Sta Maria Maggiore until he had promised to reject it.¹

Vitalian (30 July 657–27 January 672) demonstrated goodwill towards the emperor and patriarch by sending them letters that, despite condemning the teaching of one will, were expressed in friendly terms. The emperor responded peaceably, confirming the privileges of the Roman church and sending as a gift golden gospels adorned with white gems of astonishing size. But relations that could be cordially conducted at long range were soon to be tested close-up. For reasons that are not clear, in about 660 Constans left the royal city for what turned out to be a leisurely promenade around the imperial territories in the West. Having proceeding via Athens, he landed in Italy at Taranto and laid siege to Benevento, the seat of a Lombard duke, but withdrew when king

Grimoald approached. From there he moved to Naples, whence he headed north, to arrive in Rome on Wednesday 5 July 663. The advent of the emperor who had brought about the death of a pope just eight years earlier cannot have been entirely welcome. Nevertheless, his sojourn was celebrated with due style. He was met by the pope and his clergy six miles outside the city; one cannot help recalling that when pope John visited Constantinople he was said to have been formally met 12 or 15 miles outside it. Constans then made his way to S Peter's, where he prayed and made a gift. On the following days he visited the churches of S Paul and S Mary, making gifts at each. Sunday saw Constans and his army processing with candles to S Peter's where, before mass was celebrated, he offered an altar cloth woven with gold. The emperor presumably resided in the Palace, but on the following Saturday Vitalian entertained him in the Lateran, where he bathed and dined. After a liturgy at S Peter's on the following Sunday, Constans and Vitalian bade farewell to each other. Alas, the man who had made generous gifts to the churches of the city did not depart empty-handed, for he removed all the bronze items that adorned the city and took the bronze tiles from the roof of the church that had been the Pantheon before Phocas turned it over to Boniface IV. One has the feeling of a plundering expedition, and it was not well received; the *Liber Pontificalis* even gives the emperor the wrong name, calling him Constantine, a mistake corrected in one late manuscript.²

The reputation of Constans was to sink further within Rome. Having made his way to Sicily, he established himself in Syracuse and for some years grievously afflicted the populations of Calabria, Sicily, Africa, and Sardinia with unprecedented taxes and imposts, breaking up families and removing sacred vessels from the churches. In 666 he added insult to injury by issuing the church of Ravenna with a privilege freeing it of subordination to that of Rome. An ugly situation had developed when, after archbishop Maurus refused a summons from Vitalian to visit Rome, he and the pope deprived each other of the right to sing the mass. The privilege Constans granted to Maurus was a great victory for his church, for among other things it prescribed that future bishops of Ravenna would be ordained not by the pope but three suffragan bishops, a practice that mirrored what took place when a pope was ordained. The church of Ravenna took its independence very seriously, to the extent that a mosaic that can still be seen on a wall of the church of S Apollinare in Classe depicts an emperor bestowing a privilege on one of its archbishops. But Constans came to a sad end, being murdered in a bathhouse in Syracuse in 669. The church of Rome had every reason to be pleased at this development, but when a general in Sicily, Mezezius, rebelled against the new emperor, Constans's son, Constantine IV, the army of Italy killed him and sent his head to Constantinople. The treatment of these events in the *Liber Pontificalis* shows

that, despite the indignities it had suffered at the hands of Constans, the Roman church had opposed the rebel, a move that signalled better relations with Constantinople.³

The following two popes were inconsequential figures of whom little is known. **Adeodatus (11 April 672–17 June 676)**, the bearer of an explicitly Christian name and the first monk to become pope since Gregory, had been raised in a monastery on the Caelian Hill, half a kilometre from the house in which Gregory had grown up. But unlike Gregory, Adeodatus was a friend of the clergy, who increased their stipend. He was mild and kind, received whoever approached him, from the greatest to the least, and behaved with such compassion to strangers that everyone received what he asked for. Perhaps, like Eugenius, he owed his election to a perception that he was not likely to cause trouble. **Donus (2 November 676–11 April 678)** was another friend of the clergy, upon whom he bestowed honours. On discovering that one monastery was home to Syrian monks who were Nestorian heretics, he dispersed them among other monasteries and installed Roman monks there, a sign of increasing cosmopolitanism in Rome that would soon be reflected in the origins of popes. He also paved the atrium in front of S Peter's with large pieces of white marble. However, another undertaking was more significant, for he erected on the Appian Way a church in honour of S Euphemia, the saint so favoured by supporters of the council of Chalcedon. It was a sign that Roman resistance to imperial policies would continue.⁴

As it turned out, the other side was the first to blink. Those responsible for the election of **Agatho (26 June 678–10 January 681)** may have believed that he would resemble his predecessors, for he was thought of as being of good will and gentle, and indeed to have bestowed honours on the clergy more than was fitting. But the mood was changing in Constantinople. Soon after Agatho became pope messengers the emperor Constantine and his brothers, who were his co-emperors, had sent to Donus arrived, asking that an embassy be sent to the royal city to hold discussions with a view to bringing about unity between the churches. The exarch was to provide money and ships.⁵ Faced with such an important matter, Agatho began to canvass opinion. In March 680 a synod met in Rome attended by 125 bishops, well in excess of the usual number, which pronounced against the teaching of one will. The matter was discussed by synod at Milan, after which bishop Mansuetus sent a report to Constantinople. Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury presided over a synod at Hatfield, which affirmed its adherence to the teachings of the council held by Martin in 649.⁶ We can dimly see Agatho acting in accordance with precedent in seeking the views of others. Before the council of Chalcedon met, Leo sent copies of his Tome to the bishops of Milan and Arles. Bishop Eusebius of Milan reported that it had been read in a synod of his bishops, who praised it, finding it

congruent with the teaching of Ambrose, and subscribed to the letter Eusebius sent to Leo, whereas only the late arrival of a letter from Arles prevented Leo from forwarding the approval of bishops who had met there to the East. The subscriptions of bishops to both letters give them a formal status.⁷

During the summer of 680 Agatho's embassy to the east departed, bearing a letter in which the pope introduced its members. Three of them were bishops, Abundantius of Paterno, John of Reggio, and John of Porto, but more important were four members of the Roman clergy, the priests Theodore and George, the deacon John, and the subdeacon Constantine. A priest from Ravenna, Theodore, also took part, in a sign of thawing relations between the churches of Rome and that city, for bishop Theodore of Ravenna had attended the council held in Rome earlier in the year. But it would be the Roman priests and deacon who signed the proceedings of the council that took place in Constantinople on behalf of Agatho, and as usual the contingent sent to the East included some high flyers, for the deacon John and subdeacon Constantine seem to have been the men of those names who became pope in 685 and 708, respectively. The letter they took with them argued strongly that Christ had two wills and asserted, perhaps unwisely, that the apostolic church of Christ could be shown never to have strayed from the pathways transmitted by the apostle, according to Christ's words to Peter. The legates reached the royal city in September, where they were housed in the palace of Placidia, the traditional base of the Roman church in the royal city. Some years earlier, at a time of bad relations, an altar in its chapel had been destroyed, but now a gentler wind was blowing. The ambassadors presented their formal letters to the emperor in a little chapel in the palace dedicated S Peter, referred to in no earlier source, and were well received.⁸

By then, Constantine had decided that the question should be settled by an ecumenical council, and it first convened in a hall of the imperial palace on 7 November. Its location bespoke the close involvement of the emperor Constantine, and indeed one author envisaged the synod as something Constantine had seen to while residing within the confines of his palace, although the legates Agatho had sent were to the fore in the direction of the council.⁹ The emperor took his seat with George the patriarch of Constantinople and Macarius of Antioch, both of them committed to a position contrary to that of the pope. The council devoted most of its energies to an extremely thorough analysis of relevant texts. After the proceedings of earlier ecumenical councils and letters sent by Agatho had been worked through, those who believed that Christ had one operation and will presented evidence to support their case, but it was believed that the texts on which they relied had been falsified, in particular a letter written by Vigilus to the patriarch Menas and a text by Menas. Then the representatives of Rome brought forward

evidence for Christ's having had two operations and wills, and asked that books be brought from the library of the church of Constantinople, so that the texts could be compared. On their being found to agree, patriarch George of Constantinople declared that he was persuaded by the case for two wills, and asked that Agatho's name be restored to the list of those commemorated in the liturgy in his church. Macarius, who remained firm in his adherence to the teaching on one will, was deposed, and by the time the council ended his replacement had arrived. The bishops concluded their work by condemning all those Agatho had condemned in his letter to Constantine. There was, however, one addition to the list, for the council did not accept Agatho's assertion that the Roman church had never strayed into error. To the eastern prelates condemned by the pope it added the name of his predecessor Honorius.¹⁰

By the time the council broke up on 16 September 681 it had lasted for over 10 months, so becoming by far the longest of the ancient ecumenical councils, for those of Nicaea and Constantinople I had each gone on for several months, and the others approximately one month each. By then Agatho had been dead for more than eight months, but a longer period would pass before **Leo II (17 August 682–3 July 683)** was ordained. News that he had been elected reached Constantinople on 10 March 681, but the emperor wanted something from the Roman church, and may have withheld consent until he was certain that it would accept the council, whose condemnation of Honorius could be expected to be resisted. Perhaps Leo had given his word that the council would be accepted before his ordination took place, but in any event the business was quickly mopped up. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes Leo receiving the council that had been held in the royal city, at which the most pious and most clement Constantine, the great emperor, had seen to matters and taken a seat, within his royal palace. The language suggested that the emperor was understood as having played a formal role, for when it spoke of his having taken a seat it employed a term generally used in Rome for bishops and priests who participated in synods.¹¹ Having been born in Sicily, Leo was competent at Greek as well as Latin, and translated the proceedings of the council into the latter language. By the end of the year he had written a warm letter to Constantine expressing approval of the council. There remained the awkward matter of the condemnation of an earlier pope, Honorius, which had taken place contrary to Agatho's expectations. The *Liber Pontificalis* smuggled his name within a list of those who had been condemned, in which it came third. In his letter to the emperor, Leo was forthright, asserting that Honorius had not illuminated the church with apostolic teaching, but had treacherously done his best to overturn the immaculate faith. But in letters sent to Spain, the only items to survive from what must have been a systematic sharing of information throughout the west, Leo adopted a gentler tone, in which

Honorius emerges as a passive figure who did not extinguish the flame of heresy at its beginning but through his negligence encouraged it, and had consented to the staining of the immaculate model of the apostolic tradition that he had received from his predecessors.¹²

The immaculate nature of the teaching of the Roman church had long been a staple of its self-perception, and Leo cannot have found the condemnation of Honorius easy. But compliance was rewarded. The patrimonies of the church in Sicily and Calabria were immediately given tax concessions and freed from the liability whereby the state had the right to purchase foodstuffs at fixed prices. Constantine also agreed with Agatho that future archbishops of Ravenna would be ordained by the pope, and that he would be the one to present them with their pallium. The arrangement involved renouncing the privilege Constans had recently granted the church of Ravenna, and perplexed a later historian of the church of Ravenna, who attributed the capitulation of bishop Theodore to his animosity towards his priests and inability to pass on the property of the church to members of his family. Moreover, the emperor ordered that in future newly elected archbishops of Ravenna were to go to Rome to be ordained, as had been the custom until Maurus obtained his privilege from Constans in 666, although it was specified that no money was to change hands. Moreover, the anniversary of the death of Maurus, who had died in 671, was not to be liturgically commemorated. It was a comprehensive defeat of the ambitions of the church of Ravenna that seemed to have achieved success in the time of Maurus, and the weak state of the Empire in Italy may have made the emperor seek a friend with more to offer than the archbishop of Ravenna. The church of that city, which his father had so generously supported, was cast aside, and in a sign of its total defeat the legal document on which its independence had been based was handed over to the apostolic see.¹³ Leo was said to have loved the poor, and was responsible for two building works. He built a church believed to have been dedicated to S Paul, in which he placed the bodies of a number of martyrs, among them Simplicius, Faustinus, and Beatrice; the principle that bodies were not to be brought into the city had now been forgotten. We also learn, from a single late manuscript of the *Liber Pontificalis*, that Leo ordered the building of a church in honour of S Sebastian and the martyr George.¹⁴

Benedict II (26 July 684–8 July 685), a former priest who had served in the church since boyhood, entered upon his office after it had been vacant for nearly a year. Whereas its administrative sophistication allowed the church to carry out many of its functions without a bishop, such a delay was intolerable. During the period between the death of Leo I and the end of Gothic government in Italy, it had usually taken less than a week for a dead pope to be replaced. But after Rome had passed under imperial authority the assent of the

emperor was usually sought after a new pope had been elected. In some cases the practice was not followed, for only 13 days lay between the death of Boniface V and the ordination of Honorius, but it usually was. As sailings between Rome and Constantinople took around a month, and were rare in winter, vacancies usually lasted for several months, but could be much longer. Furthermore, developments that no-one could have foreseen in the sixth century were making contact between the cities more difficult. In 669 Thomas, a new patriarch of Constantinople, was unable to send the customary synodical letter to pope Vitalian because Arabs were blockading the royal city. The emperor Constantine took the sensible step of renouncing his right of approval, and the right of veto that this implied, writing to the clergy, the people, and the army of Rome that a person elected pope was to be ordained immediately. This did not necessarily free the church from interference on the part of the Empire, for it quickly became apparent that approval would still need to be gained from the exarch in Ravenna, but interference would henceforth be more difficult. In another sign of goodwill, the emperor transmitted to the pope, the clergy, and the army locks of the hair of his sons, Justinian and Heraclius. Some years later, the Frankish mayor of the palace Charles Martel was to send his son Pippin to the Lombard king, who would take some of his hair and thereby symbolically become his father, and whatever precise meaning was attributed to the locks of hair the emperor sent to Rome the deed signified closeness. Benedict also undertook the restoration of old churches, and presented gifts to others. He gave to S Valentine's in the Via Flaminia a smart altar cloth, S Mary's at the Martyrs was given a purple altar cloth with a border entirely of silk, and the titular church of Lucina an altar cloth ornate with silk. Earlier popes had received pieces of silk as gifts, but Benedict is the first one known to have presented such items himself.¹⁵

John V (23 July 685–2 August 686), a Syrian who had been born in the region of Antioch, had been a member of the Roman delegation to the ecumenical council. The *Liber Pontificalis* says, as though it were significant, that after a lapse of many years and pontiffs, in accordance with ancient custom he was elected by the whole body in the Lateran and then installed in the bishop's quarters. This seems to be a sign that the new system of making a pope that bypassed Constantinople was operating, and there only existed a vacancy of 15 days between the death of Benedict and the accession of John. But John did not enjoy good health, being so weak that he could hardly carry out ordinations, and did not remain in office for long.¹⁶ His successor, **Conon (21 October 686–21 September 687)**, owed his election to an unforeseen turn of events. The death of Benedict was followed by the first disputed election in many years, in which a force that had been becoming more prominent within Rome tested its strength. The clergy favoured the archpriest Peter, and met

outside the Lateran, where elections normally took place. But the army then flexed its muscles. Soldiers blocked the entry to the Lateran, and it met in the church of S Stefano Rotondo, where it gave its support to Theodore, the priest who was second in seniority. Neither side being prepared to compromise, the clergy entered the bishop's quarters at the Lateran and elected the third most senior priest, Conon, who was accepted by the army some days later. The new pope had white hair and looked like an angel, but was a guileless man of quiet disposition who had never involved himself in worldly matters. Before long his lack of worldly experience was plain to see, for without taking advice he appointed a local man to be rector of the patrimony in Sicily. It is hard to imagine someone like Gregory I making such an elementary mistake, and the conduct of the man Conon appointed was so bad that he was later sent to Constantinople to be judged. Like his predecessor, he was so weak that he could hardly perform ordinations. His archdeacon plotted behind his back, telling the exarch that he would give him 100 lbs of gold if his succession to Conon could be effected, whereupon the exarch ordered his officials in Rome to see that this was done.¹⁷

Tumultuous scenes followed the death of Conon, for as had occurred in the preceding year a bitter dispute broke out, although on this occasion the army is not said to have been involved. The people divided into two groups, one supporting the archpriest, Theodore, who had been the candidate of the clergy during the vacancy in the preceding year, and the other the archdeacon Paschal. Each seized a part of the bishop's quarters, Theodore the inner section and Paschal the outer part, as well as the basilica Julii, the place where Boniface I and II had been ordained, and so a plausible alternative to the Lateran. As neither candidate was prepared to give way, the leading judges, the army, most of the clergy, in particular the priests, and a throng of citizens came together at the Palace. After lengthy discussion their choice fell on a priest, Sergius, whom they took into the chapel of S Caesarius, the place where Gregory I had received icons of Phocas and his wife. From there they led him, with acclamations, to the bishop's quarters in the Lateran, the place where John V had lived while awaiting confirmation of his election. But whereas Theodore greeted him and kissed him, Paschal sent to the exarch, promising money and various gifts in return for his assistance. When the exarch arrived he found Sergius's position unassailable, but quite unreasonably demanded from him the 100 lbs of gold Paschal had promised him. Paschal was bundled off to a monastery, where he died five years later, without having repented.¹⁸

Sergius would turn out to be a pope of very different stamp to his immediate predecessors, for Conon was the last of a series of unimpressive popes. They had enjoyed victories, for the doctrine of one will and the claims of the church of Ravenna had both been laid to rest, but rather than being triumphs of papal

policy these simply reflected turns in imperial policy. Doubtless the patchy nature of our evidence for this period prevents what achievements there were from emerging as clearly as one would like. The *Liber Pontificalis* states that after pope Conon died the Roman people divided into two factions, as it usually did.¹⁹ It is a tantalising comment, and one partly corroborated by the division that emerged when Conon was elected, but this was between the army and the clergy, two categories distinct from the ‘people’, and there is no hint the other elections in the period were anything other than peaceful. Assuming that the passing comment in the *Liber Pontificalis* is accurate, there are important things about papal elections of which we know nothing, and this must be true of other things as well. Nevertheless, some themes emerge clearly from the narrative of the *Liber Pontificalis* for this period.

A New Kind of Pope

It had long been the practice of the Roman church to accept boys as junior members of the clergy, among whom they held the rank of reader. Popes of the late fourth and early fifth centuries legislated concerning people who had been destined from childhood for service in the church: They were to be baptised and share in the ministry of the readers until they reached puberty, a careful watch being maintained over them until they reached 20. Late in the fifth century the readers among the clergy of Carthage are described as having been mere children; they would have resembled a bishop of Pavia of the time, who had begun his career as a recruit in the heavenly militia on becoming a reader when he was scarcely eight. The emperor Justinian thought differently, and legislated that only a person who was 18 could become a reader.²⁰ But Justinian’s views did not prevail in the West, where a number of popes seem to have become members of the clergy when much younger than this. In the sixth century, Boniface II, who had been a servant of the apostolic see from the first period of his life, was mild, humble, and a man of simplicity. His successor John II, who had been brought up in the hall of Christ, was characterised by his simplicity and goodness, and the future pope Agapetus may have been attached from his infancy as a member of the minor clergy to the church where his father was a priest, in which case there would have been a run of three popes of similar background who came to office at a politically charged time. Such figures would recur during the following century. Deusdedit, the son of a subdeacon who became pope in 615, is described in his epitaph as someone who, having been brought up from the beginning of his life within the

sheepfold of Peter, had been worthy of going on to become the shepherd of the holy flock. Pope Eugenius, who entered office in 654, is described, doubtless with a degree of exaggeration, as having been a member of the clergy from the time he was in his cradle; Benedict II, who became pope in 684, had served within the clergy from the beginning of his life and had been devoted to the Bible and chanting from his boyhood; and finally Gregory II, who had been raised within the papal quarters from the time when he was little, became pope in 715. They may not have been the only ones to have grown up among the clergy, for a text preserved in a collection of documents known as the *Liber Diurnus* seems to assume that a pope would have served in the church from a very early age. Needless to say, all these popes had been born in Rome, and every one of their names, with the exception of that of Eugenius, suggests that they were born into families where religion was taken seriously. This is an area in which the assumptions current in late antiquity, which equally allowed young children to be offered to monasteries, were very different to those of more recent centuries. But nothing in the preceding history of the church of Rome, other than a few popes who came to office during the 530s, prepares us for the number of such popes in this period. It would be reasonable to suppose that men who had grown up within the bosom of the church would act in a similar fashion, and indeed they did, although in some respects other popes of the period did so as well.²¹

As we have seen, the popes who opposed the legacy of Gregory I early in the seventh century were described in the *Liber Pontificalis* as being friends of the clergy, and as the century advanced that theme became more prominent in its accounts of popes. Deusdedit is said to have greatly loved the clergy and to have recalled the priests and clergy back to their old places; perhaps we are to understand a final move away from the policies of Gregory I. Deusdedit also left them an entire stipend on the occasion of his funeral. Succeeding popes acted in similar ways: Boniface V loved the clergy and gave them an entire stipend, and what seems to have been another for his funeral; Severinus loved the clergy and increased the gift paid to every one of them, as well as giving each of them an entire stipend; John IV left an entire stipend; Eugenius gave the customary stipend to the clergy and shared with the poor; Adeodatus increased the stipend; Donus honoured the clergy with preferments, as did Benedict; and Agatho is even said to have been overly generous in this respect. Whereas it is not clear just what the stipends that were so generously disbursed entailed, nor whether they corresponded to the donatives that emperors and some Germanic kings paid to their soldiers on special occasions, the popes who acted towards the clergy in a generous fashion were disproportionately, although not entirely, those who had been born in Rome.²² It was also said of Donus that he amplified the clergy in its different ranks with

honours, and Agatho and Benedict II are reported as having done the same. It would be possible to take this expression to mean that they ordained many people to the ranks of the clergy, so causing their ranks to swell, but this is unlikely. In the cases of two earlier popes who are credited with acting in this way, their action is connected with generosity towards the poor, and whereas Donus and Agatho both ordained a good number of priests and deacons relative to their short time in office, Benedict did not ordain any. Moreover, Benedict is said to have carried out this activity on Easter Day, and we know that it was the practice of Gregory I to make special payments to bishops, priests, deacons, and others on the dawn of Easter Day.²³ Another practice of popes of the period was the leaving of benefactions. Benedict II left 30 lbs of gold to the clergy, the monasteries that cared for the needy, and attendants. His example was followed by John IV, who left 1,900 solidi to these groups, and Conon, who left gold.²⁴

Not merely did these popes do similar things, but they are even said to have had similar personalities. Deusdedit's successor, Boniface V, was the first pope for whom the *Liber Pontificalis* provided a brief character sketch, when it described him as the most mild and compassionate of men. This may be an indication of work having been resumed on that text rather than a sudden change in the type of person becoming pope, but thereafter for a time such descriptions will be insistent. We are told that Severinus was holy, kind, and mild; that Theodore loved the needy, was generous, kind, and compassionate; that Vitalian was a holy man; that Adeodatus was mild, kind, and compassionate; that Eugenius was kindly, gentle, merciful, friendly to everyone, and outstandingly holy; that Benedict was humble, mild, compassionate, and generous; and that Agatho was kindly, merciful, cheerful with everyone, and good humoured. Doubtless they were popes with attractive personalities, but no-one would imagine that the people so described were strong and forceful types.²⁵

Such evidence suggests that some way into the seventh century popes of a different kind were coming to be elected. It would certainly be possible to press it too far. The character sketches sometimes rely on formulaic and recycled material, for that of Gregory III was based on that for Leo II, which was itself heavily indebted to passages in the work of Gennadius.²⁶ That the generosity Benedict II displayed on Easter Day occurred at a similar time to that of Gregory I suggests that, rather than new things being done, customary things were being mentioned for the first time. Perhaps the people who wrote about these popes were interested in things that had not concerned their predecessors; the authors of the accounts of Boniface II, John II, and Agapetus had not thought it worthwhile to mention their having been in the service of the church since their early years, which we only know of through epitaphs.

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that different kinds of people were becoming popes. The kind of otherworldliness they were credited with is reflected in the epitaph of Deusdedit, that emphasises his innocence.²⁷ Fewer of them were deacons. The predominance of former deacons lasted until some way into the seventh century, but thereafter an unprecedented number of priests acceded to papal office. The first among them was Deusdedit, who became pope in 615, and by the end of the century Eugenius, Benedict II, Conon, and Sergius had followed in his footsteps. More striking is the high turnover of popes that developed. From the accession of Eugenius in 654 until the death of Conon in 687 there were nine, an unprecedentedly high turnover. Given that Vitalian was pope for 15 of those years, it is clear that elderly men were becoming pope. In some cases it is hard to see why such men were elected. The choice as pope of John and Conon, both of whom are said to have been so weakened by lengthy illness that they found it hard to perform ordinations, along with that of Sisinnius, briefly pope in 708, who suffered so badly from gout that he could scarcely feed himself, is hard to explain. It is clear that the beneficiaries were the clergy, and in the absence of the involvement of the laity that had been so prominent in earlier periods, and the tendency of the imperial authorities to rubber-stamp whatever nomination was received, it seems highly likely that the clergy were electing men who were likely to see to their interests. Such men were products of the church. They can be contrasted with the last two popes who may have had a senatorial background, Honorius and Severinus, and the three strongest popes of the period, Honorius, Theodore, and Martin, all of whom were from out of town, none of whom was credited with generosity towards the clergy, and only Theodore given a positive character sketch. But popes of a different kind were soon to emerge.

The origins of **Sergius (15 December 687–8 September 701)** were in the region of Antioch, although he had been born at Palermo in Sicily. His name, Arabic in origin but increasingly common among Greek-speaking Christians, was rare in the west, but he had managed to put down deep roots in the Roman church. He arrived there while Adeodatus was pope and, having been an acolyte, was ordained a priest in 683.²⁸ No less than the hapless Conon, Sergius was a compromise candidate, but he turned out to be one of the most significant popes of late antiquity. He had to deal with the canons promulgated by another council that seems to have been held in 692, although it may have met in 691. The council that met in Constantinople in 680/681 had dealt with doctrinal matters to the exclusion of disciplinary matters, as had the preceding ecumenical council, and the emperor Justinian II, who had succeeded his father Constantine IV in 685, convoked the council in Trullo, named after a domed hall in the imperial palace where it convened, to deal with the latter. Its canons therefore have a more hands-on feeling than those of the preceding

councils, and are highly informative as to church practice. Moreover, the fathers who came together at Trullo were of a restless spirit. The bishops who attended such councils generally prided themselves on their strict adherence to tradition, and insisted that they were doing nothing more than affirming what the church had traditionally believed. But one of the canons of the council in Trullo noted that pictures sometimes showed John the Baptist pointing to a lamb, in accordance with the Baptist's description of Christ as the Lamb of God (John 1: 29). Such figures and images were signs of the truth to come, but grace and truth were more important, and henceforth Christ was to be shown as a man. Replacing something old by something new was contrary to the spirit of every preceding council. Contrary to what has sometimes been thought, there is no reason to see this canon as having been directed against Rome. But others certainly were, and in the eleventh century a Byzantine canonist, Niketas of Nicaea, mentioned three as having caused trouble.²⁹

Among the topics the council turned to was the old, contentious issue of the relative importance of the churches of Rome and Constantinople. Claiming to be renewing what had been settled at the councils of Constantinople I and Chalcedon, the council decreed that the church of Constantinople should hold privileges equal to those of the older Rome, and in church affairs should be as great as it, because it was second after it. Whereas the wording of this canon is unclear, and its use of earlier legislation rather free, it maintained something that Rome had continually resisted. The council also affirmed an underlying principle that had been laid down at Chalcedon that displeased Rome, according to which the ecclesiastical importance of a city was to be based on its political importance.³⁰ On a second matter, the council explicitly rejected Roman practice when it permitted clergy to remarry, and, setting aside what it described as the rule of the church of the Romans, it also declared that, according to an ancient rule of apostolic observance and practice, subdeacons, deacons, and priests who were married at the time of their ordination could continue to cohabit with their wives, except at times when they served at the altar. Anyone who declared, contrary to the apostolic canons, that married clergy were not to enjoy marital relations was to be deposed. The issue had long been a problem in Sicily, a part of the western church where eastern influence was strong. In 588 pope Pelagius II had ordered that subdeacons on the island were to separate from their wives, and whereas Gregory I weakened this position, declaring that henceforth only men who promised to live chastely were to be ordained subdeacons, the decree of the council clearly was contrary even to this.³¹ The council also turned its attention to fasting, traditionally an important part of Christian practice. As early as the time the *Didache* was written, perhaps in the century in which Christ lived, this was generally carried out on Wednesdays and Fridays, but practice in Rome

differed. When Augustine's mother quizzed Ambrose on the subject of fasting, he replied that when he was in Rome he did as the Romans did: In that place he fasted on Saturdays, but when he was in Milan he did not. Again explicitly opposing itself to the practice of the Roman church, this time concerning fasting on Saturdays during Lent, the council decreed that clergy who fasted on Sunday or Saturday, except for one particular Saturday, were to be deposed, whereas laypeople who did so were to be excommunicated.³² In addition to its legislation on these three matters, the council observed that the Acts of the Apostles described the creation of seven deacons, and that the council of Neocaesarea had established that even churches in large cities should have seven of them. Nevertheless, the free-spirited bishops decreed that the number seven was of no importance. No mention was made of Rome in this connection, but as the invariable practice of that church was to have seven deacons, the canon may well have been directed against it.³³

If this were not enough to concern the church of Rome, the council also presented procedural problems. Traditionally the patriarchs had been the first to sign the proceedings of a council, but at this council the first signature was that of the emperor, giving the impression that his role was more important than theirs. The signature of the metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Rome's vicar for Illyricum, occurred lower down the list than it usually did, whereas the signatures of the leaders of churches that had traditionally been under the jurisdiction of Rome were placed in a position that suggested that they may have been transferred to the jurisdiction of the church of Constantinople.³⁴ But Justinian was very keen for Sergius to accept the decrees of the council. He sent to Rome a box containing six copies of its proceedings, which would have been prepared with the expectation that the emperor, the pope, and the four eastern patriarchs would each receive one copy for their records. They had already been signed by the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, the metropolitan of Crete, who functioned as representative of the pope, and the Illyrian bishops who were subordinate to Rome, and had been confirmed by the emperor's signature; now all that remained was for Sergius to sign in the topmost place. But the pope refused to accept the documents, or even allow them to be opened so they could be read. Rejecting them as invalid he tossed them aside, claiming that he would die rather than agree to new errors. An English author who read about the council in the *Liber Pontificalis* concluded it had been heretical, and whereas it does not quite say this it is clear that Rome looked upon its canons with extreme distaste.³⁵

Sergius's conduct inevitably evoked a response. Justinian sent to Rome an officer who returned to the royal city with bishop John of Porto and the counsellor Boniface. The two were chosen with care, for John had been among the bishops Agatho had sent to represent him at the council of Constantinople,

in which city he had been given the honour of celebrating mass in Latin in Hagia Sophia on the Sunday after Easter in 681, in the presence of the emperor and patriarchs, whereas Boniface was learned in Greek, having translated part of a work that Sophronius, later patriarch of Jerusalem, had written on the martyrs John and Cyrus. We do not know what became of the pair, but before long the emperor sent to Rome a captain of his bodyguard known for his ferocity, Zacharias, with orders to convey the pope to Constantinople. But the soldiery of Ravenna, the duchy of the Pentapolis, and the surrounding regions acted to prevent this. When they came together Zacharias, fearing for his life, asked for the gates of Rome to be shut. Before long he had taken refuge in Sergius's bedroom, tearfully begging the pope to have mercy on him and save him from being killed. The army of Ravenna, which was in imperial employ and hence acting in a rebellious fashion, entered Rome near S Peter's, to the music of a trumpet, and made its way across town to the Lateran bearing weapons. A rumour spread that Sergius had been spirited away by night and put on a ship, as had happened to Martin, and when the troops found the doors of the pope's residence closed they threatened to pull them down unless they were opened immediately. At this point Zacharias, terrified out of his wits, hid under the pope's bed. Sergius, having comforted him and told him not to be afraid, opened the doors and went out to face the crowd. His soft words calmed them, but they maintained a watch before the building until the hapless Zacharias had been thrown out of Rome with injuries and rebukes. Moreover, at that very time the one who had sent him was deprived of his realm.³⁶

The account of the *Liber Pontificalis* is full of drama and humour, and whereas it raises questions, among them the position taken by the troops who were stationed within Rome who are not credited with any role in these events, it suggests a church confident in its dealings with the emperor. Whereas it had proved easy for soldiers to bundle Vigilius and, more recently, Martin off to Constantinople, Sergius remained in Rome, defiant. And the *Liber Pontificalis* uses a rhetorical device to show that Sergius was not a man to be meddled with, for the story satisfyingly ends with Justinian being deprived of his realm.³⁷ Indeed, having fallen victim to a military coup, the emperor was deposed in 696. His nose was chopped off and he was sent into exile, not far from where pope Martin had ended his days, although he was destined to return to office and create further difficulties for the Roman church.

A few years later there was good news from the north of Italy, for the long-rumbling schism over the Three Chapters was finally brought to an end. In 698 the Lombard king Cunicpert summoned bishops from both sides to a meeting in his palace at Pavia. Having been defeated in a debate, the schismatics swore to the king that they received the fifth council, and the two sides shared

communion. On the king's orders legates were sent to inform pope Sergius. Needless to say, he was happy at what had transpired in Pavia, but the schism had been resolved not by a pope but by a king. The author of a poem that was immediately written to celebrate the event went out of his way to emphasise this circumstance, for by describing Cunicpert's grandfather Aripert as having abolished the heresy of the Arians and his father Perctarit as having brought about the baptism of the Jews, putting those who refused to the sword, he placed Cunicpert as the third of a line of kings who had dealt with dissident religious groups on their own initiative. One of the two manuscripts in which the poem has come to us allows us to hear the voices of two of the groups the kings acted against, for it also contained a version of the council of Chalcedon written in the sixth century, presumably by an adherent of the schism, and a fragment of works by the anti-Nicene bishop Ulfilas that had been rubbed out. The victory over the schismatics was welcome in Rome, although its agency need not have been. Indeed, when the conversion of the archbishop of Aquileia and his bishops was described in the *Liber Pontificalis*, it was seen as the outcome of their having been taught by Sergius.³⁸

Areas further afield came within his purview. In 693 Willibrord, a man from the north of England who had been preaching among the heathens in Frisia, where he enjoyed support from the Frankish mayor of the palace, Pippin, arrived in Rome, seeking the pope's approval and blessing for his work and relics to place in the churches he hoped to build. By now the role of the pope in directing such preaching, and the taking of relics from Rome, were coming to be taken for granted. Two years later Pippin sent Willibrord to Rome again, asking Sergius to ordain him archbishop of the Frisians. This he did in the church of S Cecilia, on the feast day of that saint, 22 November. He also gave Willibrord a new name, Clement. The feast day of Clement was observed on the day that followed his ordination, but this was not the only reason for its being appropriate, for in giving Willibrord the name of the person to whom Peter was believed to have transmitted the bishop's throne and the power of binding and loosing, Sergius was indicating the relationship he hoped would exist between him and the bishop of Rome. Tucked away at the end of the *Liber Pontificalis*'s account of Sergius, the ordination of Willibrord may not have seemed significant in Rome. But it briefly brought together an English preacher, a Frankish leader, and a pope, a combination that would prove powerful in the decades to come.³⁹

Sergius was also energetic within Rome. His most substantial projects were in S Peter's, where he undertook serious work on a scale unparalleled since the time of Symmachus. He installed a large icon of the apostle, and in front of three smaller icons of him placed a large golden censer with columns for use during mass on important feast days, presumably to cense the icons. A silver

canopy was put above the throne where the pope sat in the apse and six silver lights installed there; around the altar Sergius placed eight veils, four of them white and four scarlet. He saw to the repair of buildings around the basilica that had been damaged for a long time by rainwater and rubble, perhaps an indication that the infrastructure had been neglected by his predecessors. Sergius also constructed and decorated a prominent tomb which, it had been revealed to him, would house the body of pope Leo I, hitherto lying in an out-of-the-way location. Among the bishops of the Roman church, Leo was second only to Peter; whoever was responsible for the medallions showing popes in S Paul's had so arranged them that Peter came first on the south side, and Leo on the north side. A verse inscription of 22 lines that commemorated this achievement of Sergius suggests that Leo was a figure of contemporary relevance: From his tomb he continued to admonish people, so that the cunning wolf would not wreak havoc in the sheepfold of the Lord, for those with good hearts cherished his books, whereas a perverse throng feared them. Playing on Leo's name, the inscription describes him as roaring in a way that struck the hearts of wild animals senseless. Leo's body was moved to its new resting place on 28 June 688, the vigil of the feast of Peter and Paul, and the first occasion on which the feast was celebrated after Sergius became pope. Just as Leo I had used the first celebration of the feast after he became pope to make a strong statement on the apostle, so now Sergius used it to make a powerful statement about Leo, so reinforcing the strong identification of Leo with Peter, which Leo himself had made.⁴⁰

The pope enjoyed fossicking about in S Peter's, and on one occasion he discovered in a dark corner a silver casket in which, when opened, a silk cushion could be seen. Beneath it was a bejewelled cross, which contained a wonderfully large and unspeakable portion of the saving wood of the cross of the Lord. The relic was taken to the Lateran, and from that time it was kissed and adored every year on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The cult of the cross was long established in Rome, and a depiction of the Crucifixion tucked away on a carving of the fifth century on the door of the church of Sta Sabina is the oldest known depiction of the scene in Christian art. But the key figure in the cult was Constantine. His mother, Helena, had been believed since the late fourth century to have uncovered the true cross, and portions of it proliferated. Constantine himself was said to have sent a piece of it that was kept in the basilica of Sta Croce, and Hilary and Symmachus placed portions in chapels they built. Another story, according to which Constantine saw a trophy of the cross in the sky accompanied by the words 'Conquer in this sign' as he approached Rome prior to defeating a rival emperor, gave it associations of imperial victory. A contemporary of Justinian considered the cross to be 'the emblem by which alone he has obtained both his empire and his victory in

war.' Such associations had been strengthened in the early seventh century by the important part played by the cross in the wars of Heraclius. The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross had been introduced to Rome before the time of Sergius, but he was an important figure in its development.⁴¹ He also forwarded the cult of the Virgin, decreeing that on four occasions a year the people were to make their way from a church dedicated to S Hadrian, which the energetic Honorius had founded near the forum, to the basilica of Sta Maria Maggiore, singing litanies in procession. The events were to take place on the days of feasts dedicated to the Virgin, those commemorating the Annunciation (25 March), her Falling Asleep (15 August), her Nativity (8 September), and a final one named for S Simeon that recalled the taking of Christ into the Temple by Mary and Joseph (2 February). Whereas Sergius is not credited with having introduced these feasts into Rome, henceforth they would be celebrated in a more solemn manner.⁴²

Sergius was responsible for another liturgical innovation, for he ordered that the chant 'O Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us' was to be sung by the clergy and people at the time of the fraction during mass. This innovation has been interpreted as a riposte to the unhappiness of the council in Trullo at Christ being shown in the guise of a lamb, although its introduction may have answered to purely devotional impulses. In any case, it marked another change. The early church had addressed prayer to the Father through Christ rather than to Christ himself. Whereas the Eastern church began to address prayers to Christ, as in the hymn 'Only begotten Son and Word of God' that has been attributed to Justinian, the West remained conservative, so Sergius's introduction may reflect his Eastern background.⁴³ This could be said of a number of his other innovations. Whereas there had been icons in Rome previously, those Sergius placed in S Peter's are the first referred to in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Whereas Valentinian III is said to have placed an image with 12 doors, 12 apostles, and the Saviour in S Peter's, pope Symmachus to have placed a silver image of the Saviour and the 12 apostles in Paul's, and Sergius himself to have repaired a very old image of the apostles over the door to S Paul's, these do not sound like the images of a particular saint that pope placed in S Peter's. The censuring of the images during the liturgy again suggests Eastern rather than Western practice.⁴⁴

The seventh century ended well for the church of Rome, as its reach became longer. When Sergius ordained an archbishop of Ravenna he finally brought to an end its period of being self-governing. He ordained an archbishop for the Frisian people, and was even said to have ordained an archbishop of Britain. He was also responsible for an abrupt change in the manner in which popes were buried, for from his time they would erect their own mausoleums in S Peter's, rather than being buried in its vestibule.⁴⁵ But the church had members

other than the popes and their clergy, and a consideration of them is overdue.

Laity and Martyrs

During late antiquity laypeople were being squeezed out of some of the places they had previously occupied in the life of the church. Ambrose of Milan believed that an order the apostle Paul had given for women to be silent in church did not apply when a psalm was sung, and he liked to think of elderly people, weary veterans, young men, adolescents, young women, and girls singing together in ways appropriate to their station in life, like the different strings on a musical instrument. He himself wrote immensely popular hymns for congregational singing with a rhythmical accent in simple Latin in which each phrase operated like a sound bite; years later pope Celestine recalled how Ambrose had made the people sing one of them, all together with a single voice. But by about 520 a group of singers in Rome were beginning to produce material that only a trained choir could have sung, and the function of singing during services was subtly changing as it came to be used to provide a cover for liturgical actions rather than simply embellish words. Gregory I had had to deal with unsatisfactory deacons who owed their posts to their prowess at singing, and by the late seventh century ability to sing well had become a desirable attribute in a pope, for an encomium of Leo II praised him for being outstanding in his expressive singing and psalmody, and it was noted that Benedict II had been good at singing from his early days. When the future pope Sergius arrived in Rome he was found to be good at chanting and handed over to the leader of the singers for training. Worship was coming to be performed by highly trained professional people, and the only function of the laity at a solemn mass described in a text that seems to have been written in the late seventh century was to receive communion. Similarly, by the beginning of the seventh century the sale of tombs, which had been handled by gravediggers who were usually laymen in the fourth and fifth centuries and overseers in the sixth, had been taken over by priests, and liturgical evidence suggests that the clergy were becoming more involved with funerary procedure, as the dead came to be commemorated within churches rather than at the gravesite.⁴⁶

The city was changing in other ways. Its bishops were coming to have different names. Until the late tenth century the bishops of Rome usually retained their baptismal names on entering office, providing us with an unbroken sequence of names unparalleled in its length. Until some way into

the sixth century the names of popes remained overwhelmingly classical, or at least recognisably late antique. For the first five centuries no pope bore the biblical name John; only in 523 would a man of that name become pope. In the following 200 years there would be six others. The pattern in Ravenna was similar, for the first bishop known to have been called John entered office there in 477, and by the end of the eighth century there had been five others. During the first five centuries one pope bore the name Boniface; in the following two a further four did. The explicitly Christian names Agapetus and Benedict appeared in the sixth century, as did Deusdedit and the similar Adeodatus in the seventh. The naming practice of the portion of the population that produced popes need not have been that of the community at large, and it cannot be accidental that the piously named Agapetus and Deusdedit were the sons of clergymen, but the changing nomenclature does suggest that the city was distancing itself from the traditions of antiquity.

This was not the only way in which Rome was losing contact with its roots. The laypeople who had founded the titular churches steadily passed out of memory, and people began to assume that the churches bearing their names had been dedicated to saints with the same names. The titular church that had been known in 499 by the name of its founder, Eusebius, was by 595 thought of as having been named after a saint who bore that name, although no such saint had lived. Similarly, the titular church of Marcellus in which Boniface had been ordained in 418 and which supplied three priests to the synod of 499 was, by 595, being identified as the church of S Marcellus. Other churches that had been named for their founders came to be known by the names of saints that were different.⁴⁷ The historical figure of Constantine was disappearing beneath legends that told of his dealings with pope Silvester. In the time of Leo I an inscription was placed on the façade of S Peter's that described him, dangerously ill with a condition that human skill had only worsened, being restored to health by Peter. In the early sixth century a story was told that Liberius, a pope of the fourth century, read in an old book that pope Silvester had healed Constantine of leprosy, and incurred the anger of his nephew when he spoke publicly of this. There is no hint of such a tradition in the account of Silvester contained in the *Liber Pontificalis*, apart from an unhistorical claim that Constantine had been baptised in Rome, which may have given it a point of entry, but as we have seen people in the East were coming to think of Silvester having baptised the emperor. When Gregory of Tours, late in the sixth century, wrote of the Frankish king Clovis as a new Constantine whose leprosy would be washed away by baptism, he clearly had such traditions in mind, and they would find their definitive expression in the Donation of Constantine that was probably composed in Rome in the second half of the eighth century.⁴⁸

Turning away from its classical past, the city configured itself around its Christian heroes, the throng of its martyrs, who were seen as a source of security in difficult times. Pope Leo I thought of Rome as being encircled by its shining and triumphant martyrs who crowned it with a kind of diadem made up of many gems. He asked a congregation that had come together to commemorate the deliverance of the city from Alaric in 410 who had brought it back to safety on that occasion. Leo attributed its deliverance to the care taken by the saints, whose prayers had been able to turn aside the sentence of God's judgment. The patronage exercised by the martyrs was a congenial theme for Leo, and when he introduced it into his sermons it tended to occur as they reached their climax. Another theme that he was inclined to raise towards the end of his homilies was to have a long life in Western theology: He told his hearers that they were helped not only by the prayers but also the merits of Peter. Indeed, he believed that Peter's prayers and merits were assisting him.⁴⁹ Leo's approach to the events of 410 marked an advance on that which Augustine had adopted a few decades earlier. When he mentioned people fleeing to the places of the martyrs and basilicas of the apostles, and indeed described the enemy conveying people to the basilicas where they would be safe, Augustine certainly conveyed a sense that these were respected destinations, but he never suggested that the martyrs and apostles took an interest in these people.⁵⁰ The dead were coming to be seen as more interventionist. In the 530s Cassiodorus wrote to the emperor Justinian in the name of the senate, attempting to dissuade him from attacking Italy. A rhetorically powerful speech given by the figure of Rome was followed with a reference to a petition made by Peter and Paul, who were described as having often defended the security of Rome against her enemies. The three advocates for peace marshalled by Cassiodorus give one the impression of an author still happy to deploy both classical and Christian concepts, as does Ennodius at the end of the work he wrote defending the synod that had vindicated pope Symmachus, which concludes with speeches from Peter, Paul, and Rome; before long, the figure of Rome would be no longer usable. People in Gaul thought that Rome was protected by the apostles and saints whose relics were kept there. Such was the confidence the inhabitants of the city placed in their supernatural defenders that, when Rome was besieged two years after Cassiodorus wrote to Justinian, its citizens told the general Belisarius that Peter had promised to care for one section of the wall. Such was the trust ordinary citizens placed in the apostle.⁵¹

The common understanding of the relationship between a bishop and his people in terms of that between a shepherd and his flock was not one calculated to enhance the dignity of the latter. The rows of placid sheep that could be seen in the mosaics installed in SS Cosmas and Damian, and a

number of other churches of the period, may suggest quiescent recipients of what the clergy provided. It was the opinion of pope Celestine that the people were to be taught, not followed, whereas on two occasions pope Agapetus firmly told Justinian that the laity did not have the authority to preach.⁵² Yet far from being passive consumers of a product the clergy made available to them, the laity enjoyed such things as litanies, which they were quite prepared to undertake by themselves.⁵³ They were particularly keen enthusiasts for the martyrs. It is easy to interpret the evolving cult of the martyrs as reflecting the convictions of the popes who contributed to it, such as those who commissioned mosaics showing themselves in their company. A desire to associate popes with martyrs is shown in the first edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, according to which 20 of the first 31 popes had been martyrs, and this figure, itself implausible, grew to 23 in later versions of the text. Yet there is ample evidence for laypeople taking the martyrs at least as seriously as the clergy did. It was said that when the unpopular Damasus took over the church the God-fearing people held services in places where the martyrs were buried without clergy. Simplicius seems to have built a portico from the Tiber to S Peter's that would protect visitors to the basilica from bad weather, which suggests that the route was being well used towards the end of the fifth century. In about 530 one Stephen placed in the catacomb of Commodilla a fresco in honour of his mother Turtura, who had died at the age of 60, having remained a widow for 34 years following the death of her husband, Obas. She stands to one side of the Virgin and Child, who are flanked by two saints buried in the catacomb, Felix and Adauctus. In a touching story told by Gregory I, a disabled girl who used her hands to move about described Peter as her shepherd and the one who had brought her up. The words have a feeling of authenticity, for unless I am mistaken Gregory himself never speaks of Peter as rearing people. Even the non-Catholic Goths venerated the martyrs. Just as those who rampaged through Rome in 410 refrained from violating their shrines, during the wars of the 540s they respected the shrines of Peter and Paul, ensuring that no harm came to either church and that the usual round of services was maintained, and when king Totila took Rome in 546 his first step was to visit S Peter's to pray. The martyrs suggest a world of lay devotion capable of functioning independently of the clergy.⁵⁴

Indeed, laypeople may have found the martyrs more congenial and easier to identify with than they did the clergy. Augustine was aware that the servants of Christ included many who were not bishops or clergy; that is, many men and women who were married, and many fathers and mothers of families, although any implication of gender equality in this formulation was undercut by the suggestion that a father of a family had a role similar to that of a bishop.⁵⁵ Constantine's devotion to the martyrs is shown both by the churches

he founded in their honour and the language used to describe this activity (above, p. 3f). Within a few decades of the discovery of the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius in Milan, a Roman woman had made available resources to build a church in their honour. Men and women who established churches and monasteries took care in deciding to which martyrs they would be dedicated. A noble lady who founded a monastery in a house she owned in Sicily late in the sixth century made clear her expectations: It would be consecrated to S Peter and the martyrs Laurence, Hermes, Pancras, Sebastian, and Agnes, and she approached the pope for suitable relics. In one of the powerful expressions that came so easily to him, Jerome had pointed out that, whereas the gilded Temple on the Capitol lay neglected and all the temples of the city had become covered with soot and spiders' webs, the city's centre of gravity had changed, and the populace which had formerly washed over the half-ruined shrines like a flood was now running to the tombs of the martyrs. It was to the places of the martyrs and the basilicas of the apostles that people fled when Goths entered Rome in 410; no-one thought of going to the cathedral, the headquarters of the pope. Similarly, it was to S Peter's that a group of leading Romans fled when Goths took the city in 546. Yet the Lateran had been founded earlier than S Peter's, was larger than it, more lavishly embellished, and better endowed. It functioned as the official centre of the church in Rome, whereas the martyrs' shrines, not staffed by priests and lacking regular celebration of the Eucharist, were the centres of popular devotion, and it was to them that emperors directed their gifts. Early in the fourth century pope Silvester had installed steps for going up and down that allowed people easy access to the body of Laurence, and when the shrines of Laurence and Agnes were rebuilt in the late sixth and early seventh centuries they were equipped with galleries that increased the space available for crowds of people, just as works undertaken at S Peter's and S Paul's by Gregory I made their burial places more accessible. Such projects were not attempts to stimulate interest, but responses to the popularity of the shrines.⁵⁶

If the laity enjoyed a more robust religious life than some accounts of church history might suggest, they were also more closely connected to the clergy, for not even the popes were a caste separate from the laity who surrounded them. Aspirants for papal office sometimes received support from their relatives, who were not inclined to stand back should their candidate prove successful. Pope Vigilius may have regarded the post of bishop of Rome as comparable to the senior secular offices held by his father and brother, and he did not forget his family when he became pope, for among the deacons he ordained was his scholarly nephew Rusticus, and he may also have seen to the marriage of his niece Vigilia. It is tempting to see Rusticus and Vigilia as having been the children of Vigilius's brother Reparatus, and the pope acting on their behalf in

the capacity of the senior member of the family after their father had been murdered. Some families specialised in producing churchmen. Pope Hormisdas's son Silverius became pope, and Gerontius, a primicerius of the notaries who was buried in 565, is described in his epitaph as having been connected by blood to Hormisdas. In the second half of the eighth century, pope Stephen II was succeeded in office by his younger brother Paul. A less successful family was that to which Agnellus, the son of a bishop who was believed to have been a notary of the Roman church, belonged, for having caused a nun to become pregnant and stolen her property he could not look forward to a bright future in the church. Contacts between ordained and lay members of families were maintained, across and within generations.⁵⁷

But, as is often the case, the volume of evidence we have for Gregory I allows the phenomenon to be seen most clearly. He was aware of being the direct descendant of a much earlier pope, Felix III, and he may have been related to another pope, Agapetus, for Agapetus's father, the priest Gordianus, bore the same name as Gregory's father, a lay employee of the church. One may be tempted to write this off as a coincidence, but we know that Gregory's remote ancestor, Felix III, had named one of his sons Gordianus. This name had enjoyed brief prominence during the third century, when three emperors held it, but its unpopularity in the following centuries suggests that it may have been a favourite name within a particular family. Perhaps we can go further. Among those killed during riots at the beginning of the sixth century was a priest named Gordianus, a supporter of pope Symmachus; he may have been the son of one pope, Felix, and the father of another, Agapetus. Another adherent of Symmachus was a layman, Palatinus, who paid for the construction of a church which that pope dedicated. His was another rare name, but it was also held by a brother of Gregory I, and in one of his letters Gregory mentioned a needy widow named Palatina as being among those near to him. Gregory's relatives had cause to rejoice when he became pope, for during his first year in office he arranged for disbursements to be made to his aunt Pateria and two needy widows, Palatina and Viviana, the name of the former suggesting that she may have been connected to his family. A few months later Gregory ordered that an additional payment was to be made to Palatina, and he also saw to the interests of his brother. Pateria's name is similar to that of a church official, Paterius, who took dictation from Gregory and participated in a council held in 600. But he undertook something far beyond the normal range of activities for a notary, for he wrote a work in which he arranged comments Gregory had written on various passages in the Bible in the order in which the passages that were discussed occurred in the Bible. Again, the name is not a common one, and it may be that Paterius, too, was a member of Gregory's broader family.⁵⁸ It must be admitted that

arguments developed on the basis of similarity in names must be conjectural, but almost all the evidence we have been considering bears on people who lived in the same city. Cumulatively, it suggests that, over some 150 years, one family produced two and maybe three popes, as well as laypeople who moved in church circles, its members passing freely between secular and ecclesiastical activities. It also shows a retention of family feeling among those of its members who became clergy.

It would therefore be wrong to think of popes as being insulated from the life of the city around them. But they also looked further afield. Whereas we have considered their interactions with Constantinople already in this chapter, their involvement with different parts of the West was becoming more intense. For the remainder of the chapter we shall consider areas of interactions between the church of Rome and other regions in the west.

Rome as Centre: Relics and Preachers

The multifaceted cult of S Peter was in a continuous state of development. Gregory I had been ordained at the basilica dedicated to him, rather than the Lateran, which seems until then to have been the customary place, for in the disputed elections of 494 and 530 the candidates who enjoyed greater support were both ordained there. Not long after becoming pope, Gregory ordered that the bishops in Sicily were to hold their councils not on the anniversary of the ordination of the serving pope, as had been customary, but on the birthday of S Peter.⁵⁹ The protocols of a number of councils held in the basilica dedicated to him in Rome show one way in which thinking about Peter advanced. The proceedings of a council presided over by pope Felix II in 485 describe it as having been held in the presence of blessed Peter the apostle, and the proceedings of councils presided over by pope Symmachus in 499 and 502 describe them as taking place in the basilica of blessed Peter the apostle. But a council held by Gregory I in 595 is said to have convened in the presence of the most holy body of blessed Peter the apostle, defining the locale with respect to Peter in a more physical way.⁶⁰ The downfall of a wicked archdeacon towards the end of the seventh century was attributed to the judgment of God and of blessed Peter, and the prevenient mercy of God and the assistance of Peter were credited with the failure of an attempt to take the pope to Constantinople.⁶¹ And the cult of the apostle was not merely an abstract thing, but, as the protocol to the council of 595 indicated, possessed a kind of physicality. Ambrose thought that martyrs were able to provide patronage in

difficult times, and that this could be obtained through their relics.⁶² The distribution of such relics was an important part of papal diplomacy.

On numerous occasions we have seen popes receiving gifts, and have noticed that people sometimes had reasons for offering them. The gifts given by popes were often connected with the Roman martyrs, and here too it is sometimes possible to detect an agenda. The activity of pope Damasus in promoting the martyrs of Rome may have occasioned some jealousy in his contemporary Ambrose of Milan, whose city was ill endowed in this respect. But its position soon became brighter, for after Ambrose had been bishop for some 20 years two obscure saints, Gervasius and Protasius, revealed to him where their bodies lay, and he later lifted up the body of the martyr Nazarius from a garden outside the city; if this were not enough, he was also involved in the discovery of the bodies of Agricola and Vitalis at Bologna, another northern city. Such discoveries strengthened Ambrose's position against the enemies he faced within Milan, but they also enhanced the standing of his church further afield. Before long Victricius, bishop of Rouen in the far north of Gaul, wrote a book, *On the Praise of the Saints*, in which he described the arrival there of the relics of various saints. Many of them were from northern Italy, and Victricius was in no doubt as to who his chief benefactor was: 'With what veneration might I now embrace you, blessed Ambrose?' Victricius's work survives in three manuscripts that seem to depend on a lost manuscript from Milan; we may conjecture that Victricius had sent a copy there in thanksgiving for relics Ambrose had sent him. Those who gave relics could anticipate good will from those who received them.⁶³

The world of the supernatural was in some ways a decentred one, with ebbs and flows. On Christmas Eve in 575 a possessed person at Tours caused consternation when he announced that Martin, the patron saint of the town, had abandoned it and was working miracles in Rome, but conversely demons are reported as having travelled from Rome to a monastery in Tours. A deaf and dumb man being taken to Rome in the hope of finding healing at the tombs of the apostles was healed by a holy man near Nice, and exclaimed: 'I was looking for Peter, I was looking for Paul and Laurence and the others who made Rome famous by their blood. Here I have discovered them all; here I have found every one.'⁶⁴ But within this world of dispersed holiness there were centres and peripheries. Constantinople was sadly lacking in bodies of saints, in default of which its cathedral housed artefacts such as four trumpets that were believed to have been sounded at Jericho before its walls came tumbling down, which must have made it something like a museum of religious artefacts. Occasionally emperors were able to provide people with relics, as when Justinian was said to have given bishop Germanus of Paris the crown of thorns worn by Christ, relics of the Holy Innocents, and one of the arms of the

martyr George, in which case they functioned as an adjunct to imperial rather than ecclesiastical diplomacy; but overall Constantinople imported them. Everyone knew the best place for relics; in the early seventh century an envoy from a bishop in Arabia turned up in Rome in search of some. During the reign of Theodosius II relics of the Roman martyrs Laurence and Agnes, together with those of S Stephen, had been placed in a church in Constantinople that Pulcheria had brought to completion, whereas a church dedicated to the apostles built by a former consul, Rufinus, that was consecrated in 393 received from Rome relics of Peter and Paul.⁶⁵ But popes, who had oversight of relics, became less inclined to transmit portions of the bodies of martyrs. When Justinian asked the representatives of pope Hormisdas to seek from him relics of Laurence, the response was decidedly cool, whereupon he sought something from the chains of Peter and the gridiron on which Laurence had been roasted. Rather than a portion of the body of a martyr, the emperor had to settle for secondary relics that had been in contact with such a body. He also sought from Hormisdas relics of Peter and Paul for a basilica he was erecting in their name.⁶⁶ When bishop Eutychios of Constantinople informed Pelagius I that he would very much like some relics of Peter, the pope responded by sending filings of his chains and a tunic that had been left for three days in the interior of Peter's tomb. A request from the empress Constantina to be sent the head of S Paul, or another piece of his body, to be placed in a church that was being erected in honour of him, met with a discouraging response from Gregory I. He told her that the bodies of Peter and Paul gleamed with miracles and terrors, and that people who had approached the bodies of the saints had died. In any case, he continued, it was not the practice of the Roman church to give away bodily relics; rather, it distributed pieces of cloth that had been placed near those bodies. Gregory claimed not to believe that the Greeks dug up the bodies of saints. The best he could do to help the empress was to send part of the chains worn by Paul, yet even this might prove impossible, for he was not confident of being able to file away a piece. The letter is remarkably unfriendly, and its author may be suspected of being disingenuous; his statement that pope Pelagius II, seeking to change the silver above Peter's body, was confronted by a sign that caused him no small amount of terror, invites us to believe that he desisted from this enterprise, but there is no reason to believe that he did.⁶⁷

But however disinclined he was to disturb their bodies, Gregory was happy for things associated with the martyrs to be scattered widely. Given the absence of martyrs in England, its new church had to import relics, and Gregory obliged. Although we do not know the names of the saints whose relics he sent, pope Vitalian later sent a king in the north of England relics of Peter and Paul, Laurence, the soldiers John and Paul, Gregory himself, and

Pancras, perhaps in return for gifts he had received. Gregory also despatched relics of Peter, Paul, Laurence, and Pancras for a church dedicated to them in the Gallic town of Saintes, and of Paul, Laurence, and Pancras to the bishop of Milan. These relics will not have been portions of bodies, for Gregory distinguished between the bodies of the martyrs and their relics. He felt that, contrary to what one might expect, the greatest miracles were often worked by the latter, a phenomenon he accounted for by the needs of those who were weak in faith. Whereas there are occasional signs of relics being brought to Rome from other places, the availability in Rome of the bodies of so many martyrs allowed its bishops to practice a form of soft diplomacy in distributing things associated with them, as we have seen Gregory do in the case of the Visigothic king Reccared. Indeed, the generosity of popes in distributing such items could allow their recipients to impress other people. In about 500 the Burgundian king Sigismund wrote to pope Symmachus thanking him for relics which he had sent, while informing him that most had been given away.⁶⁸

Relics were not the only things that could be sent. By the time the *Liber Pontificalis* was written, Peter was credited with having established bishops in Rome, and what he did there he could have done elsewhere. In 416 pope Innocent claimed that in the whole of Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and the nearby islands, only people who had been appointed bishops by Peter or his successors had established churches. A few decades later, Leo reminded the bishops of Sicily that the see of Peter was the mother of their episcopal dignity.⁶⁹ Legends developed that purported to show this process operating. According to a text written at some time in the seventh century, Apollinare had come from Antioch to Rome with Peter, who then sent him as a bishop to Ravenna. Some clergy of Ravenna who were experiencing difficulties with their bishop towards the end of that century went to Apollinare's church in Classe, where in the presence of legates sent by the bishop they expressed the belief that Peter had given them Apollinare to be their shepherd. A century later, Peter was also credited with having despatched Leucius to Brindisi, Anatolius to Milan, Mark to Aquileia and subsequently Alexandria, and Clement to Metz to be the first bishops of these towns. An account of the sufferings of the Nazarius whose relics Ambrose had discovered turned him into a Jew from Africa who was baptised by Peter's successor, pope Linus, although he did not become a bishop.⁷⁰ Similar stories were told in Gaul, although here the successors of Peter rather than the apostle himself were thought of as having acted. Writing to Hilary of Arles, pope Zosimus mentioned that Trophimus had been sent to Arles by the apostolic see, information that the bishops of Gaul later passed back to pope Leo. Dioceses in Gaul could be thought of as participating in a kind of secondary apostolicity. A priest who greeted a Frankish king in the name of the apostolic see was

assumed to have been to Rome, but the see in question was Bordeaux.⁷¹ By the late fifth century, Peter's successor Clement was believed to have given the job of sowing the seeds of the divine word among the gentiles to Dionysius, who found his way to Paris; a little later the arrangements were conceived in a more formal form, with Dionysius having been ordained a bishop by Clement, Peter's son in baptism, before being sent to a particular province. Unnamed bishops of Rome were thought to have sent Gatianus to Tours, Martialis to Limoges, and Stremonius to Clermont-Ferrand, whereas Ursinus was sent to Bourges, having been ordained by the disciples of the apostles, and Eutropius was sent to Saintes by Clement. The model was found applicable elsewhere, and in the eighth century a story was told of seven men who had been made bishops in Rome by the apostles transmitting the Catholic faith in Spain, each establishing himself in a different city.⁷² Such traditions, which entail a top-down model of church organisation that need not have existed in its earliest times, cannot be taken seriously. They also admit to more than one interpretation, for they could be used to suggest the independence of such churches from Rome as well as a kind of subordination to it.⁷³ But whereas there is little evidence for early popes organising evangelistic undertakings, such stories provided a context in which Gregory I's sending preachers to England, and the later activities on the continent of English preachers who were linked to Rome, could easily be slotted.

Rome as Centre: Pilgrimage and Peter

No longer the imperial capital, Rome nevertheless continued to attract visitors. Paulinus of Nola mentions family groups coming to Rome as pilgrims from the gates of Alba, Picenum, Etruria, Samnium, Capua, and Nola; he himself made a point of going there every year after Easter to venerate the apostles and martyrs. In the early sixth century the author of an epitaph thought of someone reading it who, having been captured by love for Peter, had come from the end of the earth, and people from out of town could ask people they knew to pray for them at the thresholds of the apostles. At about that time a Burgundian, Sigismund, became the first Germanic king to visit Rome as a pilgrim.⁷⁴ During the seventh century there came to be many more pilgrims. In 631 Irish visitors found themselves sharing accommodation near S Peter's with a Greek, a Hebrew, a Scythian, and an Egyptian. But the English made the running, and many nobles, non-nobles, laypeople, clergy, men, and women were said to have gone to the holy places of Rome in the late seventh and early

eighth centuries.⁷⁵ Among the visitors was king Cædwalla of the West Saxons, who was baptised and given the appropriate new name Peter on Easter Day in 689 by pope Sergius; a few years later the preacher Willibrord was given the name of Peter's successor, Clement. Having died a few days after his baptism, Cædwalla was buried in S Peter's, where Sergius placed on his tomb an epitaph describing him as someone who had laid everything aside to come from Britain, at the very edge of the round world, to the city of Romulus, impelled by the love for God to gaze at Peter and his chair.⁷⁶ Cædwalla's entourage may have included Aldhelm, a scholarly abbot who composed epigrams for use in the diocese of Wessex that may contain reminiscences of some epigrams pope Damasus had erected in the shrines of martyrs. Perhaps Aldhelm had copied them out while visiting the sites of Rome, for we know that the writing so visibly displayed in the city was read with interest by visitors; that the epitaph of pope John VII only survives in an English manuscript suggests that another northern visitor made a copy and took it home.⁷⁷

Such pilgrimages may have been particularly enjoyed by women. When an abbess of Whitby wrote to introduce a sister travelling to Rome to the abbess of a convent near Trier she may have used a form letter, and another abbess asked Boniface whether the example of many who had gone to Rome ought to be followed. But there were dangers inherent in such undertakings, and some years later Boniface was not sure whether to recommend the trip to another female correspondent, for various difficulties lay in the way of travellers to Rome, among them threats from Saracens. The stern moralist observed that many who undertook the journey came to ruin and only a few remained unhurt, there being scarcely a city in Lombardy, France, or Gaul without an English prostitute. Given the number of visitors from England, it is not surprising that the oldest coins from across the Alps that have been found in and around Rome were minted there.⁷⁸

We have another indication of the impact of such visitors. It had long been a practice for devout people to make their way around the shrines that were dotted about outside the walls of Rome. As early as the fourth century the young Jerome and his friends had made circuits of the places where the apostles and martyrs were buried as Sunday outings, and visitors to the city adopted their practice. Arriving in Rome in 500, the exiled African bishop Fulgentius would only pay calls on the servants of God after he had made a circuit of the holy places of the martyrs. When Wilfrid of York was in the city he made a circuit of the holy places every day for many months for the purpose of prayer, and a visiting bishop from Gaul is described as running around the places of the holy martyrs that were on every side.⁷⁹ During the seventh century four short works were produced to help people find their way

to the various shrines of the martyrs and churches. No less than the guidebooks clutched by modern tourists as they wander around Rome, they were designed for practical use, and their material was organised according to the gates or roads that gave access to particular sites. One of them endearingly addresses the reader in verbs of the second person singular, and envisages the various saints whose relics were kept at S Peter's as receiving pilgrims and passing them on, one to another.⁸⁰

In the drawn-out process sometimes referred to as the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, nothing was more dramatic than the sudden irruption of Huns into Gaul midway through the fifth century. People responded to it in various ways. Those living in Tonger, a town in the extreme northeast, had reason to be afraid, and their bishop was later thought to have gone to Rome to seek the intercession of Peter at his tomb, only to be told by the apostle that God had decided that Gaul was to be devastated. When the invaders reached Metz, where there was a chapel dedicated to S Stephen, that martyr asked Peter and Paul to prevent the town being destroyed, only to be informed that God had decided that it would be destroyed by fire; the chapel, however, would be saved. The Roman general who led the forces opposed to the Huns, Aetius, commended himself to Peter. When a report reached Rome that he was in danger his wife offered prayers for him in the basilicas of the apostles. A drunkard who spent a night in a corner of S Peter's overheard the apostle complaining that he found her persistent, tearful prayers intolerable, but that he had obtained from God that they would be partially successful. King Clovis and his wife Chlotild erected a church in Paris in honour of the Holy Apostles, but a later source represents Chlotild suggesting that they erect a church in honour of Peter alone, so that he would help in war. Judging by his record when the Huns invaded, Peter was not the most effective of advocates, but the use to which Clovis and Chlotild proposed to put him marked an advance on the purely defensive role that people in Rome expected Peter to discharge.⁸¹

Two monasteries in the north of England show the extent of the reach of Rome. In 674 a noble, Benedict Biscop, founded a monastery dedicated to S Peter at Wearmouth, on land donated by king Ecgrith, and in 680/681 he established a second monastery not far to the north at Jarrow, on land similarly gifted by the king; a stone placed there in 685 dedicating its basilica to S Paul can still be seen. It is possible that the foundations answered to the dynastic agenda of the king as much as the purposes of Biscop, but whatever Ecgrith's role we are certainly justified in attributing the dedications to the latter. By the time the first house was set up Benedict had been to Rome four times, and such enthusiasm was naturally expressed in the dedication of first monastery to Peter, to which the dedication of its sister house to Paul formed an obvious complement. In a work he wrote on the lives of the abbots of

Wearmouth and Jarrow, Bede states that Biscop hoped there would be peace and concord between the monasteries, and describes the following abbot, Ceolfrid, as maintaining peace, unity, and concord between them; when the third abbot, Hwætberht, was elected in 716 the monks of S Peter's and S Paul's are said to have been in concord and of a single opinion. In the second half of the fourth century the concord of the apostles Peter and Paul had been a major theme in the thinking of the church of Rome. Who would have expected it to resurface centuries later in distant Northumbria to describe relations between two religious houses dedicated to them?⁸²

Rome as Centre: Books, Privileges, Liturgy

Having founded the monastery at Wearmouth, Benedict Biscop made his fifth trip to Rome, from which he returned with countless books of every sort and relics of the apostles and martyrs. Books and relics constituted a standard couplet of items sent from Rome to outlying areas, although supplies of the former were not limitless, so that whereas pope Martin had been happy to fulfil the request of bishop Amandus of Trier for relics, he was not able to send him any books, for his library had been emptied. But the proceedings of the council of 649 reveal that copious resources were available in the library at just that time, so Martin may have been making an excuse. At Benedict's request pope Agatho allowed the most senior among the singers at S Peter's, John, to accompany him home, so that John could teach the monks the manner of chanting across the yearly cycle that was followed at S Peter's. The teaching provided by John was thorough, involving as it did both singing and reading aloud, and many copies were made of instructions he wrote down concerning the right way to celebrate feast days. Singing according to the Roman style had been a preoccupation among the English. After the forced withdrawal of the bishop in 633 church affairs in the north of England were left in the hands of the deacon James, who taught many people to sing in accordance with the practice of the Romans and the people of Canterbury, and a man who became bishop of Rochester in 669 was an expert in singing church music in accordance with Roman practice, having learned the art from the disciples of pope Gregory. But John was sent to England at the very time singing was coming to be taken more seriously in Rome, and there is reason to believe that S Peter's, where he had sung, was setting the standard, for when Gregory III came to establish a monastery at the church of S Chrysogonus he prescribed that the praises of God were to be conducted according to the way they were

in S Peter's. Agatho also gave Benedict a privilege of the kind popes had recently begun to issue, making the monastery free of any external authority, which king Ecgrith was kind enough to accept. Benedict's luggage also contained pictures for the monastery church: an icon of the Virgin and the 12 apostles, icons of the narrative of the gospels, and others illustrating the visions described by John in the Apocalypse. After he established the monastery at Jarrow, Benedict crossed the Alps yet again, to bring home from Rome a large number of holy books, icons of scenes from the New Testament and those from the Old Testament that foreshadowed them, and two silk cloths of incomparable workmanship that were exchanged for a block of land. On another occasion a book of the cosmographers that Benedict had bought in Rome was similarly exchanged for some land. Whereas Wearmouth and Jarrow were perched at the edge of the Christian world, one cannot help but notice that between them the books, the singer, the icons, and the silks that found their way there constituted a very up-to-date statement of the high culture available in Rome towards the end of the seventh century.⁸³

In 716 the 74-year-old abbot of the monasteries, Ceolfrid, who as a young man had accompanied Benedict Biscop on one of his trips to Rome, resigned his office and set off for the eternal city, where he hoped to spend the rest of his life. Furnished with a letter of introduction to pope Gregory II written by his successor, who may have been taking advantage of a chance to maintain contacts in Rome, he also took a book weighing 35 kilos, one of three copies of the Vulgate Bible that had been produced at Wearmouth or Jarrow, which he planned to offer to S Peter as a gift. The hides of thousands of cattle had been required to make the Bibles, and the properties the monasteries had been buying may have been acquired with a view to making them available. Doubtless Rome was already well provided with biblical texts, but this was a special one, for the Codex Amiatinus, as it is now known, is both the oldest surviving copy of the Bible in one volume and the oldest text we have of the translation into Latin associated with Jerome, the Vulgate. Ceolfrith died in Gaul while still on the way to Rome; the Bible now rests in the Bibliotheca Laurentiana, in Florence. This is not the first occasion when we hear of the English exporting books, for in the middle of the seventh century a nun in Gaul is said to have received holy books from Rome and regions across the sea, a form of words that can only refer to Britain. But the sending of such a lavish copy of the Bible to Rome suggests not only how far the English had come, but the place of the city in their world.⁸⁴

The influence of Rome was also exercised through the *Liber Pontificalis*, which certainly circulated north of the Alps. Gennadius of Marseilles, or whoever completed the book that has come down in his name at the end of the fifth century, described the writings of pope Gelasius in words very similar to

those used in the Roman text. When Gregory of Tours came to write brief accounts of the preceding bishops of his church, he cast them in a format that seems to have been based on the one the *Liber Pontificalis* used for popes, specifying the name of the emperor and the regnal year in which bishops who held office during the period of Roman power in Gaul assumed office, and finishing with statements of how long that person was a bishop, where he was buried, and, for the most recent period, the length for which the see remained vacant between bishops. One of the markers Gregory used to identify the year in which he finished work on his *Books of Histories* was the year of Gregory the Roman pope, and an account he gives of the tribulations of pope John I is very similar to that of the *Liber Pontificalis*, although Gregory coyly covered his tracks by claiming that, not possessing a written account of John's struggle, he followed what reliable people had told him.⁸⁵ With his extraordinary capacity to bring together information contained in different sources, when Bede discussed the linen cloth in which the body of Christ was wrapped after He was taken down from the cross he was able to quote from the account of Silvester contained in a book to which he gave the name *The Deeds of Pontiffs*, according to which it was because of that cloth that pope Silvester had ordered that neither silk nor coloured cloth was to be used when mass was celebrated, but only naturally occurring linen. The account he provided of pope Gregory II in a chronicle followed that given in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which his agent Nothelm will have read on his behalf in Rome.⁸⁶

The presence of Rome came to be felt in distant regions in other ways. The emperor Maurice and his wife were so impressed with a holy man who visited Constantinople that they arranged for his monastery to come under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople, so making its abbots independent of the local bishop, and a similar tendency would soon reveal itself in the West. It was foreshadowed when, at the request of Caesarius of Arles, pope Hormisdas decreed that future bishops of that city were to have no power over a convent he had established. In the form in which it has come down to us the text is followed by the subscriptions of seven bishops, each on them stating that he had read it through and agreed with it, so Caesarius must have pressed them for their agreement. In 628, following a visit by Bertulf, the abbot of the monastery of Bobbio in the northern Apennines, pope Honorius issued a privilege freeing that house from the control of the local bishop and placing it directly under the apostolic see; the monastery of Luxeuil in Burgundy that Columbanus had founded may have received a similar privilege some years later, as a monastery in the southwest of what is now Switzerland, that of S Maurice d'Agune, did from Eugenius.⁸⁷ The practice spread to England, where Benedict Biscop obtained privileges on behalf of his monasteries from popes Agatho and Sergius. It was probably while he was in

Rome that Aldhelm obtained from Sergius a privilege for a monastery at Malmesbury, in the west of England, and another for a nearby monastery dedicated to S John the Baptist, placing each under S Peter; an Old English version is extant, in addition to the Latin original. The practice of granting immunities, as they were called, became so common that the *Liber Diurnus* included a form letter that could be used for the purpose, which even forbade a bishop to celebrate mass in a monastery unless invited by the abbot. When, at the request of archbishop Boniface, pope Zacharias freed the monastery of Fulda from any authority other than that of Rome in 751, he issued a document that has come down to us in two forms. The shorter closely follows the standard letter that the papal chancery sent to monasteries that came under the jurisdiction of the Roman church, but the longer one expands it, by including properties and possessions it had recently come to hold and possess, and those which divine goodness would add to them through the gifts, offerings, and tithes of the faithful, before going on to add a powerful anathema. Looking back from the perspective of later papal history, we may be inclined to take the development for granted. But it came into being at a time when the authority of the popes was coming to be taken more seriously far from Rome, and given the respect of the church for the authority of the councils, it is surprising to find it flying in the face of a decree of the council of Chalcedon, that explicitly provided for monasteries to be under the authority of the local bishop.⁸⁸

The reach of Rome was also expressed through liturgy. When Augustine established the church in England, Gregory advised him to base the customs and order of service there on the best practices he had been able to find, whether they were those of the Roman or other churches. There was no compulsion in such matters, and a text from Gaul of the seventh or early eighth century shows such Eastern elements as the Trisagion flowing into the liturgy there, perhaps a sign of bishops wishing to align themselves with developments in prestigious Mediterranean regions. Avitus of Vienne knew the expanded form of the Trisagion, which he was able to quote in Greek. Late in the fourth century, Ambrose of Milan had enunciated a principle that other leaders would follow when he commented that, whereas he wished to follow the Roman church in all things, he too had his way of doing things.⁸⁹ But the gravitational pull of Rome was strong. In 529 a council in the south of Gaul legislated for more frequent singing of the Kyrie Eleison, commenting that this was the practice of the apostolic see and all the provinces of the East and Italy; it also provided for the Sanctus to be said, which may have been a delayed response to Symmachus's order that it was to be sung in Rome on Sundays and the feasts of martyrs, and for the pope to be mentioned by name during the prayers.⁹⁰ A Frankish author of the eighth century believed that the sacrifice

should be offered to God as the church of Rome did, and an unexpectedly large amount of what we know about the prayers used in the mass in Rome in late antiquity comes from texts that were copied in Gaul. These take the form of what are known as sacramentaries, books containing both the invariable canon of the mass and other prayers that changed from day to day in accordance with the liturgical calendar, which were produced for a priest to use at the altar. Three sacramentaries dating from this period have come down to us, each named after one of the great popes of the period, although none was primarily the work of the one whose name it bears. The oldest of them, conventionally known as the Leonine Sacramentary, although technically it may be wrong to call it a sacramentary, contains materials from the fifth and sixth centuries. It survives in a single copy that seems to have been made in Verona in the first quarter of the seventh century. The Gelasian Sacramentary seems to have been based on an original text composed in Rome between 628 and 715, and is known from manuscripts that were copied in Gaul; a strong case has been made for the sole copy of one of its forms in which it is extant having been made at the convent of Chelles, in the middle of the eighth century. The final sacramentary, the Gregorian, may have originated in the time of pope Honorius, although it does include prayers written by Gregory and was added to after the time of Honorius, and most of the manuscripts in which it has come down were copied in Gaul during the ninth century.⁹¹ The prevalence of manuscripts from Gaul shows the seriousness with which people there took the liturgy of Rome, and the same came to be true of England. There, a council held at Clovesho in 747 implicitly turned against the principle Gregory I had laid down to Augustine, by prescribing that the liturgical calendar, as well as the form and content of the liturgy, were to be brought into conformity with that of Rome, the standard being a particular manuscript that had come from the city. The addition of the Agnus Dei to the mass mandated by pope Sergius quickly inspired panelling on a decorated cross at Ruthwell, in what is now southern Scotland. Far away, people regarded the practice of Rome as worthy of imitation.⁹²

One figure stood towards the centre of all that Rome had to offer. As the early history of Christianity among the English came to be written, the inputs of the Irish and the British were downplayed, and the church came to look on Gregory with immense gratitude. Bede believed it was necessary to call him the apostle of his nation, slightly amending words of the Bible so that they applied to him: 'Even if he were not an apostle to others, nevertheless he is for us, for we are the seal of his apostolate in the Lord.' His language reveals his warm feelings towards Gregory, for he sometimes refers to him as 'father Gregory', the only person in his work to be designated in this way, and although he more often speaks of him as 'pope Gregory', when he used this

title he usually placed it before rather than after Gregory's name, an idiosyncrasy that suggests that when he applied the word 'pope' he understood it in personal rather than formal terms.⁹³ Writing in the west country a few decades earlier, Aldhelm had described Gregory as 'an ever watchful shepherd and our teacher', a form of words that is pleasingly alliterative in Latin and learnedly gestures towards the meaning of Gregory's name in Greek.⁹⁴ Early in the eighth century a monk of Whitby produced the first biography of Gregory, other than the short account given in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Not only does it display great warmth for its subject, but we can deduce from it that copies of most of Gregory's writings were available at the distant monastery where it was written.⁹⁵

Gregory seemed to be a person of massive significance. Within a few decades of his death a guide for visitors to the city pointed out the site of his burial. One of the chests in which Isidore of Seville stored his books was devoted to the works of Gregory, with an inscription according to which, just as Hippo shone because of its teacher Augustine, so Rome did because of its bishop Gregory. But Augustine had died some two centuries previously, whereas Gregory had been a near contemporary. A few decades after Gregory died Tajo of Zaragoza went to Rome in search of his *Moralia*, allegedly at the behest of king Chindasuinth, but the pope was not inclined to help him, and he only found what he was looking for with the aid of an angel, whereupon he copied the books with his own hand, a vast task given the length of Gregory's work, and took them back to Spain. Before long bishop Braulio of Zaragoza sent Tajo a carefully worded request to forward the manuscripts to him so that they could be copied; in Ireland the monk Lathcen produced a collection of excerpts from the *Moralia*. The nephew of the founder of a monastery in Gaul who was sent to Rome to obtain relics of Peter, Paul, and Laurence to place in churches he had dedicated to them returned with various volumes of the Bible and in particular of the works of Gregory as well. A label written late in the eighth century to accompany portions of Gregory's hair and beard that were to be seen at the convent of Chelles still survives.⁹⁶

Spain

But not all parts of the West looked towards Rome with equal intensity. By far the most intellectually distinguished region in western Europe during the seventh century was Spain, yet our survey of the reach of the Roman church had made scarcely any reference to it. Popes had certainly been in touch with

Spain during the fifth century, although communications were sometimes sent via Gaul.⁹⁷ But when the Visigothic king Reccared embraced the Catholic faith towards the end of the sixth century he did so in a manner totally independent of the pope, despite having sent a bishop to Constantinople on matters connected with the faith, apparently before he became a Catholic, and we have seen that Gregory I was hurt by his reluctance to make contact. As the seventh century progressed Spain continued to maintain its distance. A majestic series of national and provincial church councils, unparalleled elsewhere in the West, was held, which were convoked by kings, who acted in this respect as though they were emperors in Constantinople. In other respects they were wary of the emperors. Isidore of Seville held that among the councils of the church there had been four venerable synods, those of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesos, and Chalcedon. His exclusion of the fifth council, that held in Constantinople in 553, would have placed him among the schismatics of the Three Chapters had he lived in Italy. The account of Justinian he provided in his book *On Famous Men* was decidedly cool, whereas he was sympathetic to Facundus of Hermiane and Victor of Tunnuna, both supporters of the Three Chapters that had been condemned. Hostility towards the Empire may partially explain Isidore's views, for Justinian had launched an invasion of Spain in the middle of the sixth century, and the proper way to define their kingdom with respect to the Empire was a concern for Visigothic kings. But a feisty independence from Rome was also in play; the bishops of Spain took it upon themselves to advise pope Honorius how to handle the emperor, when he showed himself dangerously soft in his policy towards Jews.⁹⁸

In 633 the bishops of Spain met at the fourth council of Toledo, where they dealt with a range of practical issues that were confronting the church. In view of confusion as to when Easter ought to be celebrated, the council decreed that the chief bishops were to write to each other beforehand and communicate their common verdict to the bishops who were under them. It was a cumbersome procedure, and a more straightforward one was possible. The bishops, among them some from Spain, who attended the council of Arles in 314 asked pope Silvester to follow what was already a standard practice and send letters to all the bishops indicating on what day it was to be observed. We catch sight of pope Leo telling the bishops of Gaul and Spain when to celebrate Easter, and more recently the council of Orleans in Gaul had prescribed in 541 that when the date was not certain the metropolitan bishop was to seek a ruling from the apostolic see. But it did not occur to the bishops meeting at Toledo to avail themselves of this simple mechanism.⁹⁹ Turning to another problem that had long vexed the church, that of whether the book of the Apocalypse was to be taken as having been written by John the Evangelist and received as part of the Bible, the council accepted it, in accordance with the

authority of many councils and the synodical decrees of the holy Roman bishops, but in that order. The difference between Roman and Spanish perceptions of papal authority is nicely caught in the ways, equally tendentious, in which two copies of Latin versions of the council of Nicaea summarised its sixth canon: Whereas one asserted that it dealt with the primacy of the Roman church, another saw it as having prescribed that the Alexandrian and Roman pope(s) were to have the primacy.¹⁰⁰

The reception of the third council of Constantinople held in 680/681 brought tensions into the open. Pope Leo II and his successor Benedict II sent four letters to Spain seeking assent to what it had decided, presumably as part of a broader campaign, although no letters to other destinations have survived. Their recipients took the letters seriously, for they only survive because they were copied into a Spanish collection of canon law, the *Hispana Vulgata*. But they arrived at an inconvenient time, for the 13th council of Toledo had just broken up, so the matter was laid aside for one year, when a group of bishops met at the 14th council. Curiously enough this was merely a council of the local province, attended by a mere 17 bishops, whereas 48 had been present at the preceding council. King Erwig felt that, whereas a general council would have been appropriate, difficult circumstances made it impracticable to summon one, so the issue would be dealt with at a provincial level. In other words, the pope's dealings with the Spanish bishops were mediated by the king, who does not seem to have treated his concerns very seriously. Nevertheless, the bishops who finally came together were happy to approve what had been taught at Constantinople, finding it consonant with the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesos, and Chalcedon, and ordered that its acts should be placed immediately after the council of Chalcedon. Again, four rather than five preceding councils were named, and by ordering that the proceedings of council held in 680/681 were to be placed next to those of the council of 451 the bishops made it obvious that there had been no council of comparable standing in the intervening years. Just as the church of Rome had, for 150 years, indicated its disapproval of the second of these councils by failing to include it in lists, so the Spanish church failed to acknowledge the fifth that was recognised in Rome. The bishops then proceeded to issue their own statement on the points at issue, asserting that the faith they confessed was that concerning which the Lord had spoken when He said that the gates of hell would not prevail against it; there was no suggestion that Peter had been the subject of Christ's words, as was taken for granted in Rome. Moreover, when the bishops demanded that their formal answers were to be accepted just like letters issued as decretals, they were using technical language in a bold way, for it is impossible to imagine bishops in any region other than Spain using the very terms employed by popes in

replying to a letter from subordinates in a letter to a pope.¹⁰¹ Alas, matters did not stop there. Bishop Julian of Toledo muddled the waters by sending to Rome two works he had written that, although supporting the position adopted by Rome, could politely be described as displaying independence of judgment. They met a cool reception from pope Benedict, who spoke very critically of them. But the bishops who met at a council in Toledo in 688 ascribed the pope's reaction to his not having read Julian's work carefully enough, and launched into a long defence of the proposition, a bizarre one in the tradition of Christian thought, that there were three substances in Christ. The affair finally ran out of steam, but one has the impression of a strong church in Spain that went out of its way to irritate Rome. And whereas Gregory was highly regarded in Spain, this was in his capacity of a teacher, not a pope.¹⁰²

England

Whereas the churches of Africa, Gaul, and Spain had rich histories stretching far back in the ancient world, that of England effectively began at the end of the sixth century. In default of their own traditions, the English imported those of Rome. The Rome-focussed gaze of the English manifested itself in all kinds of ways. Augustine erected in Canterbury a church dedicated to the Saviour, in imitation of the cathedral in Rome, and the dedication of every one of the churches in the names of Peter and Paul, the Virgin, the obscure martyrs known as the Four Crowned Ones, and S Pancras that were established within and just outside Canterbury reproduced dedications in Rome. A church dedicated to S Peter at Whitby functioned as a kind of mausoleum for the Northumbrian royal family, just as S Peter's in Rome had for members of the Theodosian family. More churches were dedicated to S Peter in England during the seventh and eighth centuries than to any other saint, and other saints with Roman connections were also popular. In 655 the first Englishman to become archbishop of Canterbury was known by the very un-English name of Deudedit, one he presumably adopted in imitation of the name of a pope of a few decades earlier. Churches built by Wilfrid in Ripon and Hexham dedicated to S Peter and S Paul respectively in the 670s contain crypts that seem to have been modelled on that in the church of S Agnes erected in Rome by Honorius a few decades earlier.¹⁰³ Whereas the argument advanced by a recent scholar that Rome should be seen as the capital of Anglo-Saxon England is more provocative than persuasive, the English imagination readily turned towards

the great city, in ways that could be utterly independent of ecclesiastical affiliation, for Roman elements, especially depictions of the she wolf who played an important part in the foundation myth of the city, were depicted on English coins. The continued turning of the English towards Rome would have great consequences. But having said this, it can be difficult establishing just how it operated.¹⁰⁴

In 664 leaders of the church in the north of England came together at the monastery of Whitby to discuss the age-old and thorny question of the method to be followed in calculating the day on which Easter was to be observed. In 314 the council of Arles had been concerned that the feast be celebrated on the same day throughout the world, but controversy as to what that day might be continued across the centuries, generating remarkable passions. The matter was taken very seriously, for according to a law issued in 423, those who disagreed with everyone else on this matter were worse than all other heretics. In one of the most famous passages in his *History*, Bede purported to present the arguments advanced by speakers advocating the contrary positions of the Irish and Roman churches, which culminate in a coup de grâce administered by the spokesman for the latter, Wilfrid. Whereas he was prepared to concede that those whose usage the Irish followed may indeed have been holy men, Wilfrid argued that they could not possibly be compared with Peter, to whom Christ had said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Impressed by these majestic words, king Oswiu decided it would be wise to throw in his lot with the doorkeeper of heaven, and so the debate finished. British and Irish Christians had traditionally thought of Peter as a key bearer, and Wilfrid's opponents may have felt particular grief at his appropriation of this concept to overcome their arguments. It is easy to interpret this narrative in a high papal way, according to which the Christ-given authority of the founder of the Roman church vindicated the position taken by that church on the date of Easter, but this would be to misunderstand the way in which Bede cast the argument. The real issue had already been displayed some way into the second century, when bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, visiting Rome, had disagreed with pope Anicetus, for Polycarp celebrated Easter in accordance with the practice of John and other apostles, whereas Anicetus followed traditional Roman practice, presumably understood as having been that of Peter. A large part of the debate Bede reports had turned on the dates on which the apostles John and Peter were believed to have observed Easter, and the decisive quotation of Christ's words to the latter does no more than validate the practice of the latter in celebrating Easter against that of John. Exactly the same train of thought occurs in a letter king Nechtan of the Picts received in the name of abbot

Ceolfrith, although Bede may have been its author. Discussing the way in which clergy were to be tonsured, the author again quotes Christ's words to Peter, this time in the context of an argument that the best form of the tonsure was that shaped like a crown that Peter had adopted. In both cases, Peter was thought of not as a pope but as having held a particular practice others would do well to follow. In one of his works, Ambrose of Milan spoke of Peter the apostle, who was bishop of the church of Rome. But Bede seems to have avoided connecting the apostle with the bishop.¹⁰⁵

Bede's way of understanding the significance of Peter at the synod of Whitby was not shared by the figure whose words he purported to quote, for in the version of events supplied by Wilfrid's biographer Stephanus, which is more likely to be accurate, his argument emphasises the practice of the apostolic see, a concept foreign to Bede's narrative. But as Wilfrid's life went on, he came to have a vested interest in papal authority, for he was a man with enemies, who later twice travelled to Rome to seek the support of popes against them. In the same way, two rascally bishops who had been canonically deposed from their sees in Gaul by their episcopal colleagues appealed, with the permission of the king, to pope John III, who ordered that they be reinstated. The intervention of the pope cannot have been welcomed by the other bishops, particularly when the pair returned to their evil ways. It was frequently the case that those with the highest views of papal authority were those who stood to gain from its exercise. The representative of a bishop of Larissa who had been deposed produced in 531 a collection of letters of popes and emperors, a collection of letters concerning the church of Arles was put together at a time when that church was yielding ground to Lyon, and the impressive dossier of documents that constitute the *Collectio Avellana* was compiled in the middle of the sixth century by a member of an oppositional group within Rome.¹⁰⁶ Just as the monasteries who petitioned to be placed under the bishop of Rome feared that they stood to lose should powerful people nearer to home turn against them, the people who appealed to Rome hoped thereby to thwart those who were stronger than they were.

Despite the quality of some of its friends, the reach of Rome was lengthening, and England in particular received special attention from the popes. Faced with the need to appoint an archbishop of Canterbury, in 668 pope Vitalian ordained Theodore of Tarsus, surely the most learned person in Rome at the time. Writing to the emperors in 680, pope Agatho and those who had attended a synod in Rome mentioned that they had hoped to be joined by someone from Britain, their fellow servant and bishop Theodore, the archbishop of the great island of Britain and a philosopher. Pope Zacharias would later look back on the appointment of Theodore with pride, seeing him as the most recent in a series of preachers sent to Britain by the apostolic see

that began with Augustine. When archbishop Egbert of York drew up a collection of canons, three of the authorities he names were the great figures Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory, but the fourth was Theodore.¹⁰⁷ The epitaph pope Sergius placed in commemoration of king Cædwalla was longer than those of most popes of the period, and the coming there of his successor, king Ine, who laid aside his crown after a reign of 37 years to settle in Rome, had important consequences. Centuries later Ine was remembered as having founded, with the approval of pope Gregory II, a school of the English, where kings and both laypeople and clergy might come to be educated in Catholic teaching. Next to it he erected a church dedicated to the Virgin, where the mysteries could be celebrated by English visitors. The foundations were to be supported by one denarius sent to S Peter and the Roman church on behalf of every household in his kingdom each year, a tax later known as Peter's Pence.¹⁰⁸ Within Rome, the pilgrims naturally gravitated towards S Peter's, and groups of foreigners known as *scholae* came to be established in the neighbourhood, reinforcing the steady reconfiguration of the city around the shrine of its greatest martyr. Such was their number that the area between the Tiber and S Peter's is still called the Borgo, a term derived from the Germanic word for the *burg* in which they lived. Connections of this kind would prove powerful. It has been suggested that pilgrims who visited the tomb of pope Silvester in the cemetery of Priscilla on the Via Salaria in the seventh century caused an account of his Acts to become better known. The many visitors who were attracted to Rome were starting to influence the city.¹⁰⁹

In the first half of the eighth century Boniface, an Englishman working in Germany, was involved in networking at high levels among the Roman clergy. He exchanged friendly letters with the deacon Gemmelus, who sent him various spices and some particularly fine incense. Gemmelus, a senior person whom Boniface ultimately addressed as archdeacon, may have dictated correspondence on behalf of pope Zacharias. Boniface was also in friendly contact with Theophylact, who sent him spices and incense as presents. Theophylact, who was also referred to as being an archdeacon, was another important figure in church life, who would be a disappointed candidate for the office of pope in 757. Some of the great letter collections of late antiquity, such as those of Symmachus and Ennodius, are full of items of correspondence that puzzle modern readers by their triviality, but they were means of maintaining contact with significant and potentially useful people. It is not hard to see Boniface's correspondence with Theophylact and Gemmulus as filling the same function, and the presents as signs of goodwill. Both sides found it worth their while persisting in them, but the sending of gifts from Rome suggests that the desire to keep in touch may have been stronger on that side. Whereas Rome remained the centre, marginal areas to the north were becoming more

A Byzantine Period?

Paradoxically, the orientation towards the north occurred while Greek influences were becoming stronger within the Roman church. In 642 a Greek with a background in Jerusalem, Theodore, became pope, and the proceedings of the council held in the Lateran in 649 reveal the formidable ability of the Roman church to utilise resources in Greek shortly afterwards, on a scale undreamed of in the days of Gregory I, who found it difficult to obtain in Rome people capable of translating Greek into idiomatic Latin. Indeed, he complained that the Latin versions they produced were so poor that he could scarcely understand them. A Sicilian with a Greek name, Agatho, became pope in 678, and his successor Leo was from the same island, long a stronghold of Greek practices. With the exception of Leo's successor, the short-lived Benedict II, every pope from John V, who had been born in Syria, until the time Gregory II entered office in 715 was from the Greek-speaking East. But it was not only at the top level that the personnel of the church became more Greek. Among the clergymen Agatho sent to Constantinople in 680 were Theodore, George, and Constantine, men whose Greek names had been borne by no member of the clergy who attended the synods held by Felix III in 485 and Symmachus in 499 and 502. People attending a synod held in Rome early in the eighth century were described as speaking Greek among themselves. The author of the account of Vitalian in the *Liber Pontificalis* was comfortable in using the proper Greek word for a tax levied by the emperor, and the person who wrote that of Agatho knew the proper Greek words for consuls and senate. Technical Greek vocabulary is recurrent thereafter in the portion of the *Liber Pontificalis* that covers late antiquity.¹¹¹

It is not difficult to account for the development, for the advances of Persians and then Arabs in the middle east that were responsible for the coming of Maximus to Africa and, presumably, Theodore of Tarsus to Rome, could easily have brought many more, such as the Syrian monks whom pope Donus discovered were Nestorians. The development may even have been reflected in the choice given to candidates for baptism in Rome of confessing Christ in either Latin or Greek during the seventh century, although the practice may have commenced at an earlier date.¹¹² But it is possible to see the church as being more Greek than it really was. Amid the throngs of pilgrims, those from the east made a poor showing, and of some 400 inscriptions they

left in the city, only 8% are in Greek.¹¹³ And the church had the ability to absorb foreigners. The language we have seen being used for popes from the time of Deusdedit was applied to people from Sicily and the East as well as local popes.

In any case, the practical activities of the church of Rome were centred on the West. These must have been far stronger than the surviving sources indicate. We have seen pope Martin disseminating texts of the council of 649, Agatho seeking support prior to sending legates to Constantinople, and Leo II sending the results of the council. That our sparse evidence for the three campaigns relates to very different areas is a reminder of its extremely patchy nature. The centrality of the church of Rome was taken for granted by people in areas such as Gaul, who saw it as a conduit between themselves and the wider world. Avitus of Vienne asked a pope to write to the bishop of Jerusalem on his behalf, seeking a gift of a portion of the Cross, and in 584 a Frankish king wrote to the Roman apocrisiarius in Constantinople, asking for his help in negotiations with the emperor. No-one in the East, by contrast, sought to use the church in this way. And whereas not all the Irish will have been pleased to receive a letter from pope Honorius instructing them on the correct date for the celebration of Easter, there were those in even that remote church who made much of Rome. When the churches of Kildare and Armagh were locked in competition, each emphasised its connections with Rome, and a group who went to Rome to clarify the date of Easter was described as going like children to their mother.¹¹⁴

Sitting Still

Such visits were common, and Rome can rarely have been empty of people who came there on business, among them the men who sought to be ordained as bishops of suburbicarian churches. They had to bring with them formal letters, and were subject to interrogation by the Roman archdeacon, who enquired whether they had been guilty of homosexual practice, taking a nun, bestiality, or taking as a wife a woman who had already been married; only after they had denied all these practices in the presence of the body of Peter would the pope ordain them. By the end of the century even the important bishop of Ravenna had to be ordained in Rome, contrary to earlier practice. The bishops of the mainland suburbicarian churches visited Rome twice a year, on the anniversary of the pope's ordination and the feast of Peter and Paul, and attempts were made to monitor their other movements; pope Gelasius had

been furious to learn that the bishop of Volaterra had planned to visit Ravenna without obtaining his permission. There was a strong expectation that they would attend the biennial synods, for the papal offices kept copies of the standard letters of invitation that were sent.¹¹⁵

The coming of so many people to Rome added to the dignity of its bishops, but so did their reluctance to leave Rome. Amid so much movement, the popes sat still. Ambrose of Milan seems to have lived in a whirlwind of movement: On two occasions he travelled to Gaul on behalf of an emperor, he played a dominant role at a council held in Aquileia in 381, and his involvement in the discovery of relics at Bologna is known from a sermon he preached at Florence. His counterparts in Rome, however, were content to stay at home. In the three centuries between Leo I and Zacharias, such trips as they made were often involuntary, as was the case with most, if not all, of their visits to Constantinople, or undertaken at the behest of a political authority, as with Leo's mission to Attila. They never left Rome on their own volition for anything other than political reasons. Popes could be thought of as visiting other areas, but only in a metaphorical sense, as was the case of one who was described as having preached the word of salvation in Germany, but this was by means of a preacher he had sent. One has the impression they were not keen to travel. Sometimes they received pressing invitations, as when Anastasius invited Hormisdas to preside over a council in 514 and Justinian urged him to travel to Constantinople a few years later; but he was unmoved. Rather than attending important councils, popes were content to be represented by legates. One might ascribe this practice to distance or potential linguistic embarrassment, but such things could hardly explain the failure of pope Silvester to join the various bishops from mainland Italy and Sicily who attended the council of Arles in 314; the two priests and two deacons he sent were the first of a long line of representatives of a bishop of Rome at councils he disdained to attend in person. Leo asserted that his attendance at Chalcedon was permitted neither by the pressure of the times nor any precedent; indeed, the failure of a pope to attend the earlier councils of Nicaea or Ephesos was in accordance with a habitual principle. People in the East seem to have expected popes to attend councils, and sought explanations for their absence, so that pope Celestine was believed to have asked the bishop of Alexandria to take his place at the council of Ephesos in 431, as the difficulty of sailing in winter prevented his attending. Controversies in nearby churches that a visit from a pope could have settled on the spot, such as that which beset the church in Naples in the time of Gregory I, were inefficiently dealt with by correspondence, and rumbled on. When Pelagius II suggested to bishop Elias of Aquileia that a meeting of bishops be held in Ravenna, he made it clear that representatives would handle his case. Oddly enough, for much of this period

emperors chose to remain in their capitals rather than campaign far away, but given that this practice both began and ended during our period the popes who adhered to it would not necessarily have thought that they were acting in an imperial manner. For centuries, popes would see themselves as the still centre of a turning world. No pope would grace the council of Trent with his presence during the 16th century. The enthusiasm of recent popes for travel points to a different model of how the papal office should be exercised.¹¹⁶

Notes

- 1 *LP*, 77, with 76.8 on length of vacancy.
- 2 *LP*, 78, with Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 5.12 (the preceding chapters discuss his doings in Italy prior to his coming to Rome). Letter to Peter: Mansi 11: 572. *LP* 78.3 has Constans send goods stripped from Rome to the royal city, but it emerges from 79.3 that the bronze got no further than Syracuse, where Saracens plundered it and took it to Alexandria.
- 3 Afflicted population: *LP*, 78.4. Ravenna: *LPR*, 110, 113. Mosaic: Deliyannis (2010: 272; the identity of the emperor and archbishop is not certain.) Murder: Theophanes, 6160. Rebellion: Mezezius: *LP*, 79.2 (apparently misplaced), with Theophanes 6160; I follow the former.
- 4 *LP*, 80.1; Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 5.31 (attributing the work to ‘Domnus pope of the Roman church’ and naming the place where the work occurred the *paradisus*, an early use of the word in this sense.)
- 5 Like predecessors: *LP*, 81.1, 17. Embassy: *LP*, 81.3; Mansi 11: 195–201.
- 6 Roman council: Mansi, 11: 185f. Milan: Mansi, 11: 203ff. Hatfield: Bede, *HE*, 4.15 (17).
- 7 Leo, ep. 97, 99, 102.
- 8 *LP*, 81.1, 3; *LPR*, 124. Letter: Mansi, 11: 234ff (242 on the apostolic church). Altar destroyed: *LP*, 76.2.
- 9 The proceedings of the council (ed *ACO*, 2/2) are complemented by a confused account in the *LP*, 81.6–14, presumably based on reports sent to Agatho by his legates (ed. Duchesne, p. 356 n. 13). One author: Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 6.5.
- 10 Alberigo et al., p. 197.
- 11 Taking a seat: (*residente*); *LP*, 82.2; cf *MGH AA* 12: 401(*residentibus*); *MGH Ep* 3: 363 (*residens*); *ACO* 2nd ser 1: 3, 31 etc (*residentibus*).
- 12 *PL* 96: 419D (to Constantine); 411B (to the bishops of Spain; cf 419 to king Erwig.) *LP*, 59.2, includes Honorius’s name in the list of those condemned by the council of Constantinople, without identifying him as a pope.
- 13 Concessions: *LP*, 84.2; cf *LPR*, 112, which attributed them to the time of pope Agatho.
- 14 S Paul’s: *LP*, 82.4, with Davis, p. xlv, on the dedication; some conjectures by Duchesne in his edition of the *LP* (p. 361 n 9) seem fanciful. S Sebastian and S George’s: *LP*, ed.

- Mommsen, p. 201. See in general Coates-Stephens (1997): 184–86.
- 15 Constantine: *LP*, 83.3. The following election was confirmed by the exarch: *LP*, 85.2. Thomas: Howard-Johnston (2010): 492. Charles Martel: Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 6.53. Restorations and gifts: *LP*, 83.2.
 - 16 *LP*, 84.1.
 - 17 *LP*, 85; 86.4 for gold.
 - 18 Tumults: *LP*, 86.2–5. Basilica Julii: R. Luciani, in Pani Ermini (2000): 114.
 - 19 *LP*, 86.2.
 - 20 Siricius, *ep.* 1.9 (*PL* 13: 1141); Zosimus, *ep.* 9.3 (*PL* 20: 672); see further Pietri (1976): 691f. *Lectores infantuli* in Carthage: Victor of Vita, *hist pers*, 3.35. Bishop of Pavia: Ennodius, *V Epi*, 8 (*MGH AA* 7: 85); Justinian: *nov*, 123.
 - 21 *LP*, ed. Duchesne, pp. 283 n. 14 (Boniface), 286 n. 4 (John II), 288 n. 1 (Agapetus). Deusededit: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 319, 320 n. 7, line 7f. Eugenius: *LP*, 77.1. Benedict: *LP*, 83.1. Gregory II: *LP*, 91.1. *Liber Diurnus*: p. 112. Monasteries: *Reg Ben*, 59 (*CSEL* 75: 151–53).
 - 22 *LP*, 70.1, 4 (Deusededit), 71.1, 3 (Boniface V), 73.5 (Severinus), 74.3 (John IV), 77.1 (Eugenius), 79.1 (Adeodatus), 80.1 (Donus), 83.1 (Benedict), 81.17 (Agatho). Gregory: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.25.
 - 23 *LP*, 80.1 (Donus; *clerum videlicet diversis ordinibus honoribus ampliavit*), 81.17 (Agatho), 83.5 (Benedict). Earlier popes: *LP*, 51.2 (Gelasius); *LP*, Cononian epitome, ed. Mommsen p. 122 (Symmachus).
 - 24 *LP*, 83.5, 84.5, 85.5.
 - 25 *LP*, 71.1, 73.5, 75.1, 77.1, 78.5, 83.1.
 - 26 *LP* 92.1; 82.1 and, for Gennadius, below, p. 256f.
 - 27 Note the amazingly alliterative: *Simplicitas sapiens, vivax solertia, simplex, Serpentina fuit simplicitas vigen*s (*LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 320 n. 7, l.11f).
 - 28 *LP*, 86.1.
 - 29 The council is ed. Alberigo et al. Lamb: c. 82. Not against Rome: Vogt (1988). Niketas: *PG* 120: 717.
 - 30 C. 36, with 38, the latter quoting Chalcedon c. 17.
 - 31 C. 13, with 3. For the ‘rule of the Romans’, see e.g. Leo, *ep.* 14.4 (*PL* 54: 672f); in 444 the council of Orange declared that married deacons, priests, and bishops in Gaul were to abstain from marital relations (c. 22; *CCSL* 148: 84.) Gregory: *ep.* 1.42; Justinian *nov*, 6 is hard to interpret. The eccentric Synesius of Cyrene hoped to have children while a bishop (*ep.* 105, *PG* 66: 1485.) Columban knew of deacons cohabiting with their wives who became bishops, and regarded them as adulterers (*ep.* 1, *MGH Ep* 3: 158f). See in general, Heith-Stade (2010). Heid (2000): 311 sees the council as being responsible for a major innovation.
 - 32 Practice of Ambrose: Augustine, *ep.* 36.9.32; 54.2.3 (*PL* 33: 146; 200f). Note too pope Innocent I, *ep.* 25 (*PL* 20: 555f) and John the deacon, aware that a Saturday fast distinguished the Roman church from the East (*PL* 59: 406). Leo the Great enjoined fasting on Wednesdays and Friday, and vigils on Saturday (e.g. *tract.* 12.4 (*CCSL* 138: 53)). See too Isidore of Seville: *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* 1.43(42).1 (*CCSL* 113: 47f). Gregory the Great seems to envisage the Lenten fast being relaxed only on Sundays: *hom ev.* 1.16.5 (*CCSL*

- 141:113f); the *LP* attributes the fast to pope Telesphorus (9.2).
- 33 C. 16.
- 34 Todt (2002): 35, helpfully summarising the conclusions of Ohme (1990).
- 35 *LP*, 86.6f. English author: Bede, *chron maior*, 565 (*MGH AA* 13: 316).
- 36 *LP*, 86.6–9; I cannot resist following Duchesne and reading *tuba* at p. 373.17, so making the soldiers advance to the sound of a trumpet, but *turba* (a throng) may be more plausible. Bishop John: *LP*, 81.3, 15. Boniface: *PG* 87: 3379ff.
- 37 Justinian *regno privatus*: 86.86.9.
- 38 *Carmen de synodo ticinense* (the name assigned to it by modern editors), ed *MGH SRLI* 190f. *LP*: 86.15.
- 39 Alcuin, *V Willi*, *MGH SRM* 7: 81–141; Bede, *HE*, 5. 10f; *LP*, 86.16. S Cecilia: Willibrord, *Calendar*, ed. Wilson, p. 42f.
- 40 *LP*, 86.11–13; see further Mackie (2003): 78. Inscription: *ICUR ns* 2, no. 4148. Medallions: Picard (1988): 508.
- 41 Discovery: *LP*, 86.10. Door: Branbenburg (2005); 177. Portions: *LP*, 34.22 (Constantine), 48.3 (Hilary), 53.7 (Symmachus). Justinian: Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.2.11 (trans. Dewing). Feast of Exaltation: Ó Carragáin (2005): 189ff, 230.
- 42 *LP*, 86. 14; the last is not explicitly connected with Mary, but Bede already calls it the day of S Mary (*De temp rat*, 12, *CCSL*123A: 323). McKinnon suggests on the basis of liturgical propers that the Hypaante may have been introduced as early as the time of Theodore II, the other three in the pontificate of Sergius: (2000): 107f, in the course of a somewhat hypothetical general discussion.
- 43 *LP*, 86.14, with Ó Carrigáin (2005): 248. Note, however, that Gregory I introduced the petition *Christe eleison* into the liturgy, explicitly in opposition to Greek practice (ep. 9.26), and that the expression *qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis* was part of the Gloria (*LP*, 53.11 on its introduction in Rome; cf 9.2 on pope Telesphorus).
- 44 *LP*, 46.4 (Valentinian), 53.8 (Symmachus), 86.12 (Sergius).
- 45 *LP*, 86.16, with *LPR*, 125 (Ravenna), Bede, *HE*, 5.11 (Frisians) and 5.8 (archbishop of Britain ordained in Gaul; on which *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 381f n. 48). Mausolea: Borgolte (1989: 94).
- 46 Ambrose: *in ps xii*, 1.9. Singing: Bernard (1996), esp. 409f, 424, 584 for summaries of a dense argument. Popes: *LP*, 82.1, 83.1, 86.1. Solemn mass: *Ord Rom* 1.116 (2, p. 103; on the date, pp. 38–51.) Gravediggers: Guyon (1974), who notes that the change was related to the practice of burials within the city. Funerary procedure: Costambeys (2001): 182–85.
- 47 Summary information on the synods of 499 and 595 in a note of Hartmann (*MGH Ep* 1: 366f, n. 23); more detail in Geertman (1975): 143–53, and, on the church of Eusebius, Costambeys (2001): 177f.
- 48 Inscription: Liverani (2008). Leprosy: *Gesta Liberii Papae*, *PLS* 3: 1389, 91. Baptised: *LP*, 43.13. Clovis: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 2.31.
- 49 Leo, *tract*, 82.6 (triumphant martyrs), 84 (410), with 4.4, 76.9, 82.6, 85.4. Merits: *tract*, 92.4, 94.4, with 3.3. In other respects, however, Leo's theology has surprising similarities to that of the Protestant reformers.
- 50 *Civ. dei* 1.1, 7 (*CCSL* 47: 1f, 6); although Augustine felt that the confessor Felix appeared

- when Nola was attacked by barbarians: *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 16.19 (*PL* 40: 606). Alaric was later believed to have stated that he was making war on the Romans, not the apostles (*Hist Goth* 16; MGH AA 11: 274).
- 51 Cassiodorus: v *ar*, 11.13.6. Gaul: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 6.6. Siege: Procopius, *Wars*, 5.23.5.
- 52 Celestine: Arnobius, *conflictus*, 2.13 (CCSL 25A: 112). Agapetus: *coll avel*, pp. 209.21f, 343.13f.
- 53 Justinian, *nov*, 123.32.
- 54 *Liber Pontificalis*: ed. Mommsen, p. xx. Time of Damasus: *coll avel*, 1.12. Picard (1974): 857; Procopius mentions a stoa extending from the city to S Paul's: *Wars*, 6.4.9. Turtura: Russo (1979f); Osborne (1985): 300–2; that pope John I restored the cemetery of Felix and Adauctus (*LP*, 55.76) is suggestive as to the date, but not decisive. See on inscriptional evidence Carletti (2002): 350. Girl: Gregory, *dial*, 3.25.2. Goths in 540s: Procopius, *Wars*, 6.4.10. Totila: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.20.22.
- 55 Augustine: *in Ioh* 51.13 (CCSL 36: 445).
- 56 Gervasius and Protasius: above, p. 123. Jerome: ep. 107.1. Leading Romans: Procopius, *Wars*, 7.20.19. Constantine's donations to S Peter's include properties in the East which he only controlled after 324, suggesting that it was founded after the cathedral. Embellishment: the *LP* records twice as much gold in the Lateran as in S Peter's. Endowments: the Baptistry (perhaps to be taken as the whole church) enjoyed an annual income of over 10,000 solidi, those given for lighting over 3,000, apparently larger than S Peter's, although much of its income was in kind. Noble lady: Gregory I, ep. 9.233, 11.5; the expression *desiderat consecrari* is formulaic in Gregory, as at ep. 2.9, 2.15. 3.58. Official versus popular centre: Krautheimer (2000): 56. 410: Augustine, *civ dei*, 1.1 (CCSL 47: 1). Galleries: Brandenburg (2005): 237, 240. Silvester: *LP*, 34.24. On Gregory's work at S Peter's and S Paul's, *LP* 66.4 is cryptic: see on the former Brandenburg (2005): 101, and on the latter Docci (2006): 67–70.
- 57 Aspirants: Cassiodorus, *var*, 9.15.9. Rusticus and Vigilia: above, p. 104, 84. Hormisdas and Silverius: *LP*, 60.1. Gerontius: Gerontius: *ICUR ns* 1, no. 1477. Stephen and Paul: *LP*, 95.1. Agnellus: Gregory I, ep. 4.6.
- 58 Felix III: Gregory, *dial*, 4.17.1; *hom ev*, 38.15 (CCSL 141: 374–76). Gordianus, son of Felix: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 253 n. 2. Agapitus's father: *LP*, p. 287.1. Priest Gordianus: *LP*, p. 261.5. Gregory's father: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 1.1, 4.83. Palatinus pays for church: *LP*, p. 46. Gregory's brother: Gregory, ep. 11.4 (*glorioso fratre meo Palatino patricio*, MGH *Ep* 2: 262.26, with n. 2). Relatives: Gregory, ep. 1.37, 42, 57. Paterius: Gregory, ep. 5.26, 6.12, 9.97, 11.15; see too John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.11. His work is printed in *PL* 79.
- 59 Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 10.1; cf *LP*, 53.2, 57.1.
- 60 Felix: ed. Thiel, p. 252. Symmachus: MGH AA 12: 399, 438. Gregory: MGH *Ep* 1: 363.1, reiterated at 377.23.
- 61 *LP*, 86.5.7.
- 62 Ambrose: *vid*, 9.55.
- 63 Paulinus, *V Ambrosii*, 14, 32.2, 29 (SAEMO 24/2: 42, 62, 58f). Victricius on saints: *Liber de Laude Sanctorum* 11 (CCSL 64:86); on Ambrose, *ibid*. 2 (71f), with important comments by Gussone (1976), esp. 126f. Manuscripts: CCSL 64: 57f, 59. Good will (*gratia*): Gregory I, ep. 4.30.

- 64 Gregory of Tours, *V Mart.*, 2.25 (Martin); *lib vit pat*, 16.3 (demons), *lib hist*, 6.6 (deaf and dumb man).
- 65 Trumpets: *Origines*, ed. Preger, p. 98 (no. 22). Germanus: AASS April 23: 111. Arabia: Gregory I, ep. 11.20. Reign of Theodosius: Theodore lector, *HE*, 2.64; Marcellinus comes, *chron*, 453.5 (*MGH AA* 11: 85). Church of Rufinus: Callinicos, *Vie d'Hypatios* 8.4 (*SChr* 177: 98).
- 66 Deal with popes: Gregory of Tours, *glor mart*, 82 (*MGH SRM* 2: 94). Justinian: *coll avel*, 218. The gridiron remained in Rome: Geertman (1975): 156–63. Peter and Paul: *coll avel*, 187, p. 645.6ff.
- 67 Euty chius: Pelagius, ep. 20. Constantine: Gregory I, ep. 4.30; cf on Pelagius *LP*, 65.2. Use of word brandeum: Metzger (2004).
- 68 England: Bede, *HE*, 1.29f (Gregory), 3.29 (Vitalian). Saintes: Gregory, ep. 6.48. Milan: Gregory, ep. 9.183. Gregory distinguished: *dial* 2.38.2f. Occasional signs: Gregory, ep. 3.19 (relics of Severin). Sigismund: Avitus of Vienne, ep.29 (*MGH AA* 6/2: 59).
- 69 Cabié, ed, *La lettre*, pp. 18–20. Leo: ep. 16,1, *PL* 54: 696.
- 70 Apollinaire: AASS *Iul* 5: 344–50 (arguing for an earlier dating, Orioli (1986) underestimates the ability of intelligent writers to create plausible falsity), with *LPR*, 122. More widely: Paul the deacon, *gest episc mett*, *MGH Scriptores* (in folio) 2: 261. Nazarius: Lanéry (2010): 243.
- 71 Trophimus: *MGH Ep* 3: 19.8. Bordeaux: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 4.26 (cf Sidonius Apollinaris ep. 6.1.3 on Troyes.)
- 72 Clement and Dionysius: *MGH AA* 4/2: 103; *SRM* 3: 221f. Unnamed bishops: Gregory of Tours, *glor conf*, 4, 27, 29, 79; *glor mart*, 47, 55; cf *lib hist*, 1.30, adding the sending of Trophimus to Arles, Paul to Narbonne, Saturninus to Toulouse, and, the one with the greatest future, Dionysius to Paris. Saturninus was sent to Toulouse by the disciples of the apostles: *glor mart*, 47. Spain: *Pasionario Hispánico* 2, pp. 256–58; on the date, 1, pp. 125–30.
- 73 Tavano (1972).
- 74 Paulinus: Hymn 11. 203–10; ep. 45. Epitaph: *LP*, p. 274 n. 25, lines 3f. Out of town: Ennodius, ep. 9.25.3, 9.26.3 (*MGH AA* 7: 308, 316). Sigismund: Kaiser (2004).
- 75 Irish: Cumman, ep., l. 281–83. English: Bede, *HE*, 5.7 (p. 294); the slightly different wording in *Chron*. 590 (*MGH AA* 13: 320) is followed by Paul the Deacon, *hist lang*, 6.37. In general, Carletti (2002): 335ff; note his comment on a growing ‘timore reverenziale’ (338). Of some 400 inscriptions left by pilgrims in Rome, 92% are in Latin and 8% in Greek: Carletti (2002): 344f.
- 76 Levison (1946): 259–65 with 33–6 (dedications), 36–44 (pilgrims). The epitaph, of unknown authorship, is given by Bede, *HE*, 5.7.
- 77 Aldhelm: Lapidge (2007): 52–62. A correspondent mentioned his having been in Rome: *MGH AA* 15: 494. John’s epitaph: Levison (1910): 364. Compare the analysis of the Donation of Constantine in Huyghebaert (1979): 198–208.
- 78 Form letter: Boniface and Lull, ep. 8 (*MGH Ep* 3: 248f). Example: ep. 14 (Boniface’s correspondents represent themselves as being separated from him *longo intervallo terrae marisque* (263.3), a possible reminiscence of a phrase from Gregory I, *longa terrarum atque maris intervalla* (ep. 5.41, *MGH Ep* 1: 332.29f). Dangers: ep. 27 (p. 277f). Prostitutes: Boniface, ep. 78 (*MGH Ep* 3: 357). Coins: Arslan and Morrisson (2002): 1274–76.

- 79 Jerome: *In Ez*, 12.40 (*PL* 25: 375). Fulgentius: *V Fulg*, 13.27 (*PL* 65.130). Wilfrid: *V Wilf*, 5 (*MGH SRM* 6: 198). Bishop: *V Boniti*, 35 (*MGH SRM* 6: 132. Well discussed by F. Nicolai, in Pani Ermini (2000): 221–23.
- 80 Texts printed in *CCSL* 175; the work referred to is the *Notitia ecclesiarum Urbis Romae*. The map in Bauer (2004): 157 allows the itinerary within S Peter's to be followed.
- 81 Tonger and Metz: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 2.5f, admittedly from a later period (interesting evidence for the spread of the cult of Stephen). Aetius: Prosper, *MGH AA* 9: 490. Aetius's wife: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 2.7. Clovis and Chlotild: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 2.43; *lib hist franc*, 17 (*MGH SRM* 2: 267).
- 82 *Historia Abbatum*, 7, 13, 18 (ed. Plummer pp. 370, 377, 383), with Huskinson (1982).
- 83 Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, 6, 9 (Benedict's trips). Bishop Amandus: Martin, ep 2 (*PL* 87: 138). Singing: Bede, *HE*, 4.18, with 2.20, 4.2. Book of cosmographers: *Historia Abbatum*, 15. Gregory III: *LP*, 92.9.
- 84 Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, 16–23, with *Historia Abbatum auctore Anonymo* 37 on the Codex. It is discussed by Fischer (1963). Nun in Gaul: *V Gert* 2 (*MGH SRM* 2: 457).
- 85 Gennadius: cf *vir ill*, 94 (*PL* 58: 1115) with *LP*, 51.6. Gregory of Tours: *lib hist*, 10.31. John: Gregory, *glor mart*, 39; cf with *LP*, 55. Manuscripts are discussed by Bougard (2009): 135f.
- 86 Silvester: Bede, *in marc*, 4 (*CCSL* 120: 638); he heavily draws on the *LP* in the last part of his *De temporum ratione*, and at various places in his historical works. Gregory II: Bede, *chron. maiorem*, 4671 (*MGH AA* 13: 319f); *LP*, 91.5f.
- 87 Maurice: *Vie de Théodore*, cap. 82. Hormisdas, ep. 150 (ed. Thiel, pp. 988–90). Honorius: Jaffé/Wattenbach no. 2017, with *Vitae Columbani* 2.23 (*MGH SRM* 4: 145). S Maurice d'Againe: Anton (1975).
- 88 Malmesbury: Lapidge (2007): 62–4, with Rauer (2006) on the relationship between the Latin and English texts. Aldhelm: Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, 6, 15 (ed. Plummer, pp. 369, 380). *Liber Diurnus*: p. 93f. Fulda: *MGH Ep* 3: 374. Chalcedon: c 4 (ed. Alberigo et al., p. 140).
- 89 Gregory I: Bede, *HE*, 1.27 (qu. 2). Gaul: Quasten (1943); further, McKinnon (2000): 71–3. Avitus: *MGH AA* 6/2: 22. Ambrose: *de sacr*, 3.1.5f.
- 90 Council of Vaison, can. 3 (*CCSL* 148A; 79); yet John the Deacon credited Gregory I with introducing the Kyrie into the mass (*V Greg*, 2.20). Symmachus: *LP*, 53.11.
- 91 Gregory: Bede, *HE* 1.27 *interr.* 2 (ed. Plummer, p. 49). Frankish author: *ord rom*, ed. Andrieu, 15.155; 3 p. 125. On sacramentaries, an enormously complex area, see Vogel (1986): 64–102.
- 92 Council of Clovesho: Cubitt (1995): 124ff. Ruthwell: Ó Carragáin (2005): 160–64.
- 93 Gregory an apostle: *HE* 2.1 (p. 73; cf 1 Cor 9:2). *Pater Gregorius*: *HE*, 1.25, 27, 30; 2.1. In book 1 of the *HE*, *papa Gregorius* occurs at 1.25, 28, 29, 32; the more formal *Gregorius papa* only in a text quoted by Bede (1.27, pp. 48f), although he uses both forms in his prefatory letter to king Ceolwulf (ed. Plummer, p. 6).
- 94 *Pervigil pastor et pedagogus noster* (*MGH AA* 15: 314:13).
- 95 Disciples: Bede, *HE*, praef. (p. 6). Biography: *Earliest Life*, discussed by Rambridge (2001).
- 96 Site of burial: *CCSL* 147:311.214f. Isidore: *PL* 82: 1110 (xii). On Tajo, Deswarte (2010): 256–58. Lathcen: *CCSL* 145. Nephew: *Gesta Sanctorum Patrum*, p. 9f. Label: *CLA* 18, no. 669: 49

- 97 Hydatius, *cont chron Hier*, 145 (MGH AA 11: 25); Leo, ep. 102.5.
- 98 Reccared: above, p. 137f, with Gregory I, ep. 5.53a. Councils: Garcia Villoslada (1979): 537–40. Isidore: Councils, *etym* 6.15.5–10. *Vir ill*: 19, 25f. Kings: Mülke (2009). Honorius: above, p. 177.
- 99 Arles: CCSL 148: 9. Leo: ep. 138. Council of Orleans: can. 1 (CCSL 148A: 132).
- 100 Toledo IV: *Coleccion canonica* 5, pp. 161–274. Nicaea: Turner ed. *Monumenta*, pp. 167, 197. On relations between Spain and Rome, Garcia Villoslada (1979): 689–97; Deswarte (2010).
- 101 Toledo XIV: Vives, pp. 441–48. The technical terms are *responsa* and *ad vicem decretalium epistolarum*.
- 102 Julian: CCSL 115: 129–39. Toledo XV: Vives, pp. 449–74.
- 103 Dedications: Moorhead (2009b): 141f. Mausoleum: Bede, *HE*, 3.24, p. 179; *Earliest Life of Gregory*, 18f. But such things were known elsewhere: Kaiser (2004): 203f. Deusdedit: Bede, *HE*, 3.20. Wilfrid: McClendon (2005): 66f.
- 104 Scholar: Howe (2008). Coins: Gannon (2003).
- 105 Arles: c. 1 (CCSL 148: 5). Law: *cod theod*, 16.10.24. Bede, *HE*, 3.25 (Whitby on Easter), 5.21 (letter on tonsure, ed. Plummer, pp. 341–44). Key bearer: Gildas, *excid*, 73 (MGH AA 13: 67); Columban (MGH *Ep* 3: 158.20, 175.6); Cummian (ep. l. 89, with note); but on the Continent Isidore, *ort et obit*, 114 (*PL* 83: 149). Polycarp: Eusebius, *HE*, 5.24.10f; apparently the resurrection was regularly celebrated on Sundays in Rome rather than on a special feast day. Ambrose: *sacr*, 3.6. On this, Moorhead (2009a).
- 106 Wilfrid: *V Wilf* 10, 29–33, 50–55 (MGH *SRM* 6.) Rascally bishops: Gregory of Tours, *lib hist*, 5.20. The *Collectio Ecclesiae Thessalonicensis*, *Liber Auctoritatum Ecclesiae Arelatensis* and *Collectio Avellana* are discussed by Jasper and Fuhrman (2001), respectively at 81–83, 85–87, 83–85. The bishop of Lyons was referred to as a patriarch in 585 (CCSL 148A: 238.3).
- 107 Whereas Bede suggests that Theodore Agatho's third choice for the job (*HE*, 4.1), recent work demonstrates Theodore's distinction: Lapidge (1995). Ortenburg (1995) sees the appointment of Theodore as connected with pope Agatho's dealings with Wilfrid of York. Agatho: *PL* 87: 1224. Vitalian: *Ep. Bon et Lul*, 80 (MGH *Ep* 3: 16–19). Egbert: *PL* 89: 445.
- 108 Matthew Paris, *chron maj*, ed. Rolls Series 57/1: 330f.
- 109 Silvester: Pohlkamp (1992).
- 110 Correspondence with Gemmelus: Boniface, ep. 54, 62, 104, with Ertl (1938): 72–81, on Zacharias; note too MGH *Ep* 3: 127. Correspondence with Theophylact: 84f. 757: *LP*, Paul 1f.
- 111 Gregory: ep. 10.21. Synod: *V Wilfridi* 52 (MGH *SRM* 6: 247.24). *LP*: 78.4 (*diagrafa*), 81.6 (*ypati omnique synclitu*); technical Greek words also occur at 81.4 (*pisma*), 8 (*chartophylace*); 83.3 (*mallones*), 86.10 (*stauracin*), 14 (*Ypapante*).
- 112 Baptism: *Ordines Romani*, 11.62, 62 (vol. 2: 434f).
- 113 Carletti (2002): 344f; Von Falkenhausen adduces sparse evidence, (1988): 644f.
- 114 *Avitus*: ep. 20, (MGH AA 6/2: 53; apparently the request was successful, cf ep. 25, 56f.) King: MGH *Ep* 3: 141f. Kildare and Armagh: Neuman de Vegvar (2003): esp. 165–67. Group: Cummian, ep., l. 287.
- 115 Candidates for ordination: *Ord rom* 34. 14–18 (ed. Andrieu 3: 606f). Ravenna: *LPR*, 124f; cf

above p. 200f. Form letters: *Liber Diurnus*, pp. 100, 134, with 372. Gelasius: frag. 7 (ed. Thiel, p. 286); cf frag. 11, p. 489.

- 116 Preacher: *LP*, 91. Arles: e.g. *CCSL* 148: 14.19f. Leo: ep. 93; *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, p. 147f). Easterners: Theophanes, 5924 (on Celestine), 6002, 6006. Pelagius II: *MGH Ep* 2: 449.

Little is known of **John VI (30 October 701–11 January 705)**, but encounters he had with two secular authorities that are briefly described in the *Liber Pontificalis* foreshadow major themes in papal history during the eighth century.¹ In the first of these, a newly appointed Byzantine exarch, Theophylact, arrived in Rome while on his way from Sicily to Ravenna. Hearing of his approach, soldiers from the different parts of Italy came together at the city, planning trouble. John intervened on behalf of the exarch, shutting the gates of the city and, by sending priests out to the soldiers' camp, putting an end to the riotous sedition. The exarch emerges from this story as a pitiable figure, and the treatment of him is not sympathetic. For some time exarchs had been playing a malign role in church affairs: We have encountered them plundering the papal quarters, plotting to kill a pope while he was giving communion, demanding payment of a bribe, and cutting the throats of clergy. Moreover, the emperors whose representatives they were persistently appear as supporters of heresy, and the city in which they lived as a place that was best avoided: Some of the embassies sent there by popes failed in their purpose, and of the popes who visited Constantinople, John I was imprisoned on his return to Italy, Agapetus died while there, Vigilius endured humiliation and disgrace, and Martin died wretchedly in exile. Writing to the emperors in 680, Agatho had assured them of the pleasure he took from their happy state of tranquillity and his joy at their safety.² But whereas both sides continued to take for granted a close relationship between the Empire and the church of Rome, by the beginning of the eighth century it was a sadly dysfunctional one. And whereas exarchs would continue to do disagreeable things, the balance of power between them and the popes was changing, for they were coming to need the popes more than the popes needed them.

A Lombard leader, duke Gisulf of Benevento also caused problems for John. Having advanced northward, setting fires, pillaging, and taking many captives, he built a camp near Rome. On this occasion the soldiers who had caused trouble for the exarch were nowhere to be seen, and John sent Gisulf priests bearing offerings. He succeeded in redeeming all the captives and made the

duke return to the place from which he had come. In default of action from the representatives of the Empire, John emerges as dealing effectively with someone whose appearance at this point can take a reader of the *Liber Pontificalis* by surprise. He is the first named individual that text states was a Lombard, and indeed this is the first occasion in 100 years that it mentions Lombards. During the intervening period their role in Italian affairs had developed.

As a number of popes had been all too aware, their arrival in the sixth century had caused havoc. When supporters of the Three Chapters pointed out to Gregory I that from the time they had become an issue Italy had been scourged, the best he could do was to quote one of his favourite biblical texts, 'for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth' (Heb 12: 6). Paul the deacon, looking back in the late eighth century, thought that wretched Italy had experienced savagery from nearly all the nations of Germany.³ But as time passed the Lombards became more quiescent, as changing patterns in travel reveal. In the late sixth century they prevented some bishops from going to Rome; these were transferred to the jurisdiction of the church of Ravenna. When Augustine and his companions made their way to England a few years later they avoided territory under Lombard control by proceeding up the Rhône, and this remained the standard route between Rome and England until well into the seventh century. The first traveller known to have made the journey using an Alpine pass is Wilfrid, who did so in 678, encountering along the way the Lombard king Perctarit, whom he found a humble and quiet man, and during the eighth century a route over the Alps was more commonly used than those to the west. The changing pattern suggests that the Lombards were becoming a part of the settled order, and they began to cultivate better relations with their neighbours. Shortly after pope John VI died king Aripert issued a document returning to the ownership of S Peter the estates that had constituted the patrimony of the church in the Cottian Alps before they had been confiscated by king Rothari over 50 years previously. No less than the content of the document, its form was striking, for it was written in the gold letters that were used for important texts. One of the loveliest products of late antique workmanship is the *Codex Argenteus*, a partial text of the Gospels translated into Gothic that had been written in silver and gold ink on parchment died in purple in Ostrogothic Italy, and among the items Wilfrid bestowed on a church he built at Ripon was a copy of the Gospels, written in gold on purple parchment. An English preacher on the continent who was not afraid to impose on his friends asked an abbeſs to copy out for him in gold the letters written by the apostle Peter, so that fleshly people would be moved to honour and reverence the Bible when he preached. It was a time in which people could be dazzled by the beauty of texts, and by

issuing the document in this form Aripert invested it with the utmost solemnity.⁴

Further good signs followed. Some years later pope Gregory II obtained confirmation of Aripert's restoration of the estates from a later king, Liutprand. In 705 duke Faroald of Spoleto asked pope John VII to confirm the privileges and possessions of the monastery at Farfa, which he did, and in 713 Liutprand again displayed good will to the church by issuing a law that permitted Lombards nearing death to dispose of their property for the good of their souls. Such disposals, which the Frankish king Chilperic had tried to prevent, allowed the assets of deceased persons to be diverted towards churches, and so away from family members who would otherwise have inherited them. An awkwardly worded portion of an edict issued by Liutprand in 721 described the pope of the church of Rome as the head of the churches of God and all the bishops in the whole world. Yet the Lombards, despite having become overwhelmingly Catholic, remained a distinctive group within Italy. The account of Gisulph in the *Liber Pontificalis* describes him as 'duke of the race of the Lombards', and the authors of this work persistently thought of the Lombards as constituting a race. This may seem natural, as they also referred to Angles and Saracens as races. But these peoples were distant, and the text never describes the Goths who had been in Italy earlier as a race. Oddly enough it first speaks of 'Goths' in the time of pope Agapetus, some 40 years after Theoderic came to power, and the ways in which it went on to use the term suggests that Goths were envisaged as a military group rather than a race. The terminology used of the Lombards suggests that they were seen in different terms.⁵

Despite the shortness of his time in office, much more is known about **John VII (1 March 705–16 October 707)** than about his predecessor. Although having been born in Greece, his father, Plato, had worked for the state in Rome, for an epitaph John composed to commemorate him describes him as having served the Empire well, in particular by undertaking restorations of the old imperial palace in Rome. John believed that, having died, Plato was making his way to the divine palace of the eternal king. He also wrote an epitaph for his mother, Blatta, in 687, in which he describes himself as the overseer of Appia, which must mean that he was a functionary of the church, responsible for administering the portion of its patrimony that lay along the Via Appia. Perhaps John's family was like that of Gregory I, one in which different generations could serve the church in lay and clerical capacities.⁶

John undertook two works in honour of Mary. During the sixth century a church had been built inside an older complex of buildings by the forum that by the following century was known as Sta Maria Antiqua. Pope Martin had already commissioned frescoes for the church, but John had new ones painted

over them. Along the sidewalls were pictures of the 12 apostles and scenes from the life of Christ, but it was a massive fresco at the front of the church that drew the eye. Its lowest level displayed pictures of veils, above which were portraits of four fathers of the church, two from the West on the left—Augustine and one who cannot be identified—and two from the East on the right—Gregory of Nazianzos and Basil; the name of the first is given in Latin and those of the last two in Greek. Above them four popes were to be seen, the furthest to the left being John himself. Just as Honorius had represented himself in the company of a former pope in a mosaic in the church of S Agnes, so John was shown with Leo I, a pope who cannot be identified, and Martin. His square halo shows that he was alive when the work was undertaken, according to a convention followed by Gregory I, when he arranged to have himself shown in a picture with what was described as something looking like a writing tablet, rather than a crown, about his head, for this was the sign of a living person. At the top of the fresco was a large portrayal of the adoration of Christ, shown naked, on the Cross, flanked by the Virgin and John the Forerunner. The work has a very Byzantine feeling, and some have interpreted its topmost part as a representation of an account in the Apocalypse of the adoration of the lamb in which the lamb had been replaced by Christ. Were this so, John may have been seeking to comply with canon 82 of the council in Trullo, according to which Christ was to be portrayed in human form, rather than that of a lamb, and so perhaps softening Sergius's opposition to that council. But the inclusion of the haloed figure of the martyred Martin showed that John's loyalty to the Empire had limits.⁷

He also had a chapel built in honour of the Virgin within S Peter's, decorated with frescoes that are known from drawings made in the 17th century. An inscription informed its viewers who deserved credit for it: 'John, the unworthy bishop, the slave of the blessed Mother of God, made this.' The profession of unworthiness was something traditional among popes, but the words that followed were less expected. In an icon that John presented to the church of Sta Maria in Trastevere, the Virgin's headdress, and other aspects of her accoutrement, resemble those of the empress Theodora in the mosaic at San Vitale in Ravenna, and a damaged portion at its bottom right-hand corner may have shown John kneeling before her and her Son. This marked a clear advance on the portrayal of Mary at Sta Maria Maggiore, where she had been shown within a narrative cycle, wearing court rather than imperial dress, and depictions of Mary in imperial guise would have a great future in Rome, to a greater extent than in the East. But the Greek lettering used in the inscriptions John placed in his chapel was inspired by old models in Constantinople, and Byzantine influence would lie behind the portrayal of prostration, had he been shown doing this in an icon. And whereas John's styling himself the slave of

the Mother of God may suggest a Mariology of hypertrophic proportions, there was a contemporary parallel, for coins minted between 692 and 695 described the emperor Justinian II as the slave of God. His adoption of a similar title allowed John to align himself with the emperor. He would be buried in the chapel, beneath an altar he had constructed in honour of the Virgin, with an epitaph, known from a copy made by an English visitor, that spoke of him entrusting his soul to the protective covering of the holy mother. One of the most archetypal images in western poetry is that of a shepherd lying beneath the protective covering of a spreading beech tree which occurs at the beginning of Vergil's first *Eclogue*, and perhaps we are meant to detect a literary allusion. But John's attitude towards Mary can also be placed in a tradition of eastern Christian devotion, for a Greek papyrus of the third century contains a prayer that speaks of fleeing under the compassionate care of the Theotokos, as the 'God-bearing' Virgin was referred to in Greek. Whereas the roots of such devotion were deep, its expression was becoming more overt, for 69% of iconographic lead seals produced in Byzantium during the seventh century bore images of Mary. John's enthusiasm for her sits easily within an eastern context that could be seen elsewhere in Rome at the time, for depictions of the bathing of the infant Christ, the disbelieving midwife Salome, and the Crucifixion in wall-paintings in the catacomb of San Valentino, the style of which suggests they were executed in the first decade of the eighth century, can similarly be placed against a background of developments in the art of the Christian East.⁸

Unexpectedly, John began to construct new administrative headquarters for the church on the Palatine hill, just above the church of Sta Maria Anti-qua with which he was involved. Symmachus and John III had moved from the Lateran in response to changed circumstances, but John's was a spontaneous move onto property traditionally owned by the state, for which the only possible parallel in late antiquity is Hilary's building a residence near S Laurence's. Fragmentary evidence suggests continued interest in the site of the imperial residence after emperors ceased to live in Rome. In 500 Theodoric had entered it and made funds available for its restoration, and shortly after Felix IV had created the basilica of SS Cosmas and Damian on the Via Sacra which ran in front of the palace, the government repaired the statues of elephants that lined it. Narses seems to have established himself there at the time when John III moved outside the city, and in 653 pope Martin had spent two uncomfortable nights there with the exarch. In 603 an image of Phocas had been placed in a chapel dedicated to S Caesarius in the palace, to which the supporters of Sergius had taken him in 687. The site may have had happy memories for John, whose father had overseen restoration of the palace. The move to a new location, in which John was to die, is hard to explain, although

it suggests yet again a blurring of the line separating the pope from the emperor.⁹

But a resurgent emperor would cause problems for John. Having been deposed, Justinian II fled to the territory of the Khazars, old allies of the Empire who were based in the lower Volga. They were significant enough for the emperor Heraclius to have planned for one of his daughters to marry their ruler, and now Justinian married a daughter of the khan.¹⁰ The new name Justinian gave her, Theodora, suggested the great imperial couple of the sixth century who, among other things, had caused so much heartache for the church of Rome. In 705 Justinian, aided by his father-in-law, retook Constantinople and, having cut the throats of his enemies, returned to business that had lapsed in his absence. Pope Sergius having refused to endorse the canons of the council in Trullo at an earlier time, Justinian adopted a more conciliatory line. Two metropolitan bishops were sent to Rome bearing a formal letter inviting John to convene a council of the Roman church that would approve whatever seemed suitable and quash whatever did not. The terms seem utterly reasonable, but John was frightened. On regaining power Justinian had blinded Kallinikos, the patriarch of Constantinople who had crowned the emperors who had succeeded him, and sent the man to Rome. The gesture may have been intended to intimidate the pope, and John took no chances, for he sent back to the royal city the copies of the acts that had remained in Rome since Justinian had sent them to Sergius, without signing them or making any changes. 'After these things he did not last long in this life,' the *Liber Pontificalis* says of John, in a typical turn of phrase that implies causation without asserting it. A tone of uneasiness underlies its account of John, which also surfaces in the statement that he had pictures of himself made for different churches, so that anyone who wanted to know what he looked like would see his face on them.¹¹ Justinian would return to the matter.

The pope who succeeded John, the Syrian **Sisinnius (15 January–4 February 708)** was another pope whose election is hard to explain, for he suffered from gout and was incapable of feeding himself. But after a few weeks, during which he managed to ordain a bishop for Corsica, he died, to be succeeded by another Syrian, **Constantine (25 March 708–9 April 715)**. The new pope was an old hand in dealing with the East, for he is probably to be identified with the subdeacon of this name among the legates Agatho sent to the council of Constantinople in 680. A letter Leo II later sent the emperor confirming the acts of the council concluded by mentioning the person who delivered it, the subdeacon Constantine, and commended him, recommending that the emperor pay special attention to what he said; Constantine will have been entrusted with a sensitive message the pope thought it best not to commit to writing.¹² Now, nearly 30 years later, his time had come. It was probably not

long after he became pope that he ordained a new archbishop of Ravenna, Felix. But the subjection of the church of Ravenna to that of Rome continued to rankle, and after the ceremony Felix was unwilling to submit the standard documents that new bishops handed over to be kept in the archive of the church, producing instead a document that he had composed himself. Constantine placed it by the tomb of S Peter, and some days later it was found burned, as though by fire. Before long a Byzantine fleet arrived. Felix and people who had joined him in unspecified plotting were arrested and taken to Constantinople, where the archbishop was blinded, just as Kallinikos had been a few years earlier, and exiled to the region of Pontus. People in Rome felt that these events had occurred in accordance with the judgment of God and the sentence of Peter. Later, however, Felix returned to Italy and was reconciled with Constantine. Those in Ravenna told a different version of the story, according to which Felix was taken to Constantinople for reasons unconnected with the pope and was later sent back to his see laden with wealth by Justinian's successor, although they admitted that he had been blinded. Whereas the two accounts cannot be reconciled, they both make it clear that trips to Constantinople were fraught with danger.¹³

Before long it would be Constantine's turn. A formal summons arrived from Justinian, ordering him to proceed to the royal city. We possess a detailed account of his experiences, perhaps written by a member of his entourage. He set sail on 5 October 710, surprisingly late in the sailing season, and as the two bishops who accompanied him, Nicetas of Silva Candida and George of Porto, were from nearby churches, we may deduce that the trip was organised in a hurry. Three priests, one deacon, two subdeacons, and some clergy of lesser rank accompanied the bishops. At Naples Constantine encountered the exarch John, but whatever passed between them went badly, for John proceeded to Rome where he brutally killed the deacon who was administering the church in the absence of the pope, and others of its officials; on returning to Ravenna he is said to have died a shameful death. Nevertheless the party was well received in Sicily by Theodore, who had commanded the fleet that acted against bishop Felix of Ravenna, and after he treated the pope with veneration he was healed of an illness. Having sailed around the foot of Italy the party wintered in Otranto, where a letter arrived from Justinian ordering that the pope was to be treated as though he were the emperor himself. Justinian's son Tiberius and the patriarch Cyrus were among the large and exultant crowd that met the pope seven miles outside the city. Constantine and the leaders of his party made their entrance riding horses the emperor had supplied that were equipped with golden reins and fringed saddle cloths, restrictions on the use of which had in the past occasioned angry debate between the bishops of Rome and Ravenna. The pope enjoyed the distinction of wearing a special head

covering resembling a turban, the use of which was restricted to the sovereign and high dignitaries. Having visited the imperial palace he settled into the nearby palace of Placidia. From the town of Nicaea Justinian sent the pope another official letter, informing him that they were to meet at Nikomedeia. Justinian is said to have prostrated himself before the pope and to have kissed his feet; a mosaic placed above the main door leading into Hagia Sophia in around 900 that shows an emperor venerating Christ suggests what the ceremony entailed. Constantine celebrated mass for the emperor and gave him communion with his own hands, a powerful sign of unity between the two men. Justinian renewed all the privileges of the church, and gave the pope his approval to go home after what may have been an unexpectedly long time away.¹⁴

Constantine arrived back in Rome on 24 October 711, having completed what would be the last visit of a pope to Constantinople until 1967. Justinian's order that the pope was to be treated as if he were the emperor suggests a perception of equality between the offices each held, and the ceremony by which popes were received was indeed modelled on that by which an emperor was greeted on arriving at a city. Papal visits unfolded according to familiar procedure: In prostrating himself before Constantine Justinian was acting as Justin I and Justinian I did when they met John and Agapetus, although the kissing of the pope's feet may have marked an advance in ceremonial. Another traditional highlight of a pope's visit to the East was his presiding at a Eucharist in the presence of the emperor. John I had already done this at Easter in 526, and the bishop of Porto who celebrated mass in Latin a week after Easter in 681 in the presence of the emperor and patriarchs will have been acting in the pope's stead. Even the hint that Constantine may have miraculously cured the ailing Theodore in Sicily echoes earlier trips, for whereas the popes of late antiquity are credited with few miracles, John I was believed to have healed a blind man in Constantinople by placing his hand on him, and Agapetus, on his way to meet Justinian a few years later, had used a more complicated procedure to heal a deaf and dumb person. A good deal of ritual enactment characterised Constantine's time away from Rome.¹⁵

The period of just over a year that Constantine spent away from Rome was the longest voluntary absence of a pope during late antiquity, but it is hard to determine what the point of it was. Whereas the *Liber Pontificalis* provides a detailed account of Constantine's trip, it seems to avoid specifying the reason for its being undertaken, just as it did when telling of Vigilius's ill-fated journey. Justinian is said to have renewed all the privileges of the church, which we may conjecture involved confirming the authority of the Roman church over that of Ravenna that Felix had recently questioned, but that would have been a meagre outcome, and one that could have been obtained by

imperial mandates. It is hard to avoid the impression that Constantine was being used by an emperor whose hold on power was weak and would benefit from being associated with him. Indeed, Justinian orchestrated events in a way that suggested that he was the pope's superior, for whereas the account of Constantine's entry into the royal city provided by the *Liber Pontificalis* might suggest a triumph, the emperor did not do him the courtesy of being present, and indeed ordered him to travel further. His final destination, Nikomedeia, the modern Izmit, was some 100 km east of the royal city, a distance considerably longer than that which Justinian had to traverse to get there from Nicaea, confusingly now known as Iznik, where he had been staying. The failure of the *Liber Pontificalis* to specify that Constantine had reached a satisfactory understanding with Justinian concerning the council in Trullo suggests that he may have failed to do so, and Justinian's preparedness to have Kallinikos and Felix blinded would certainly have encouraged caution in dealing with him. The council remained a sore point, for towards the end of the eighth century pope Hadrian I wrote to a patriarch of Constantinople that he accepted all its decrees that had been promulgated lawfully and by divine influence, a form of wording that suggested that some of them may not have been. Justinian's ferocity was well known, and the pope would have found it easy to give ground.¹⁶

Any benefit that Justinian derived from associating himself with Constantine was short-lived, for three months after the pope returned to Rome, news came that he had been murdered. He was remembered in Rome as having been a most Christian and orthodox emperor, but a gory tale of his murder was treasured by his enemies in Ravenna, together with the detail that his head was sent to Italy and paraded through the streets. His successor, a general named Bardanes who adopted a new name, Phillipikos, believed that Christ possessed two wills, the teaching that had been condemned by the council of Constantinople in 680/681, and began to act against that council. The demon who possessed pope Constantine's daughter claimed that he had brought the reign of Philippikos about because the emperor was his friend, but this was not the kind of backing likely to make for popularity in Rome. When the mandate proclaiming Philippikos's views arrived, Constantine held a council that forcibly rejected it, and according to the *Liber Pontificalis* the people, on fire with zeal for the faith, erected in St Peter's an image containing all six ecumenical councils. The attribution of this act to the people may seem strange, and a later author who reworked the material shaped it to suggest that the pope had been responsible, but it is of a piece with the response of the people as well as the clergy to the letter pope Eugenius received from the patriarch of Constantinople. Indeed, the *Liber Pontificalis* states that the Roman people would not accept the name of the heretical emperor, documents

issued by him, or coins bearing his portrait, so that his picture was not brought into a church and his name was not mentioned during mass. It is an intriguing list of ways in which emperors retained a presence in the city; perhaps the church into which a picture would otherwise have been taken was the chapel in the palace where an image of Phocas had been housed just over 100 years earlier. The chance reference to the picture of Philippikos allows us to glimpse the continuation of a poorly documented practice, for one and a half centuries before the arrival of the image of Phocas, one of the emperor Marcian had entered Rome. Opposition to the state was also displayed when most of the people of Rome refused to accept a person the exarch appointed as duke of Rome, and more than 60 people were killed when fighting broke out between his supporters and their enemies in front of the palace. Constantine, who would have been nearby were he living in the quarters John VII had built, obtained calm by sending priests holding copies of the gospels and a cross. But Philippikos was overthrown in June 713, and the mandate sent by the new emperor, Anastasius, revealed him to be reassuringly orthodox in his convictions.¹⁷

Administration

Constantine's dealings with bishop Felix of Ravenna when he came to Rome are a reminder of the care the church took in maintaining its records, and some of the people who accompanied that pope to the royal city allow us to see part of its administrative apparatus. His retinue did not only include bishops, priests, and a deacon, for it also comprised people mentioned as holding various offices: a *secundicerius*, a *defensor primus*, a *sacellarius*, a *nomenclator*, and a secretary. Who can these people have been? This is the first occasion on which the *Liber Pontificalis* mentions a *secundicerius*, but his title indicates that he was the second in rank among the notaries who served the church, a body whose chief was the *primicerius*. The *defensor primus*, or first among the defenders, occupied a position created by Gregory I at the end of the sixth century. The *sacellarius* was the financial officer responsible for making payments, first known in the time of Sergius; another official, the *arcarius*, who first appears receiving revenue from the patrimony in Picenum in 560, saw to the collection of the church's income, but clearly his services would not have been required on Constantine's mission. We first hear of a *nomenclator* in the time of pope Agatho, when one helped in financial administration, but a holder of the post could act in a very public way, for a

nomenclator managed the entries of people who appeared before a Roman synod held in 745. The secretary was a keeper of documents, and the word is used here of a person carrying out a task rather than being a formal title of office.¹⁸ The church had borrowed every one of these titles from the later Roman Empire and its successor states in the west. The *secundicerius* and his superior the *primicerius* were mentioned in a law issued in 381; defenders are known from the fourth century and *sacellarii* from the fifth, the most famous among them, Narses, subsequently to rule in Italy, holding the office during the following century; nomenclators were among the administrators employed by Justinian after the conquest of Africa; whereas the Ostrogothic government in Italy had made use of people described as secretaries. We need not see the church as making a statement about itself in taking over secular officers; it was simply adopting what would have been obvious administrative procedures.¹⁹

At the highest level, such people enjoyed considerable independence in carrying out their functions. Boniface and Notus, respectively a *primicerius* and *secundicerius* of the notaries, collaborated with the learned Dionysius Exiguus in sorting out the proper date for the celebration of Easter in 526, a year for which the principles followed by Victorinus yielded two possible dates, and Boniface proceeded to write a report on the matter for pope John I, part of which has come down to us in a manuscript of the ninth century.²⁰ According a law directed to a praetorian prefect in 381, the *primicerius* and the *secundicerius* were to be ranked with proconsuls and enjoy senatorial dignity, and the posts continued to attract senior people when they became part of the administrative apparatus of the church. A mural shows Theodotus, a married man and a former duke who became a *primicerius defensorum*, offering a model of a chapel he had built in the company of pope Zacharias. A duke who transferred to the service of the church during the eighth century, Theodore, held the posts of *primicerius* and first among the defenders. When his nephew Hadrian was orphaned he took the boy under his care, and the young man went on to become pope in 772; such developments suggest that the elites among the laity and the clergy may have been moving together during the eighth century. The first person known to have been a *sacellarius*, the deacon Gregory, was the future pope Gregory II.²¹ Among the toilers in the bureaucracy were people with family responsibilities, such as the notary Leo who, with his wife, the similarly named Leontia, his children, and grandchildren received from Gregory II a property on the Via Aurelia with woods that produced acorns, and cultivated fields. We learn of another family from an inscription. It was probably in 577 that a 36-year-old woman, Argentea, died. Her father, Micinius, had been in the employ of the urban prefect of Rome, and owned a garden just outside the city. In her own right a wealthy woman who was able to leave revenues from her estates for the

offering of the Eucharist and lights, she married the notary Eugenius, who would later be buried with her and their son in the Vatican. Eugenius may have been a secretary in the employ of the government rather than the church, although the circumstances of his burial make the latter possibility likely; whatever the case, he was clearly a person of means and standing. Those involved in bureaucratic tasks were surprisingly numerous, for a council held in 963 was attended by 13 secretaries.²² We may draw out an obvious implication: Scepticism has sometimes been expressed about the extent of literacy in this period, but the evidence of the Roman church suggests the existence of a class of people, laity as well as clergy, some of whom enjoyed a very comfortable standard of living, who were employed to create and utilise written documents.

No-one can study the history of the church of Rome in this period for long without coming to admire its command of data. The 60 priests pope Boniface forced to anathematise his dead rival Dioscorus each dictated the text to a notary, Redemptus, signed it, and presented Boniface with the document, which was stored away until a later pope ordered that all the documents were to be burned a few years later. A clumsily worded account written in the sixth century describes pope Julius (337–352) ordering notaries to collect documents in which people expressed their faith, and that the production of all records in the church was to be done by the *primicerius* of the notaries (if the terminology is indeed that of the time of Julius, this is the first mention of this official, ecclesiastical or secular); whether they were legal instruments, donations, exchanges, transfers, testaments, rescripts, or manumissions, they were to be carried out in the church's office. We are not obliged to accept this evidence, but the gifts Constantine made to the church in the time of pope Silvester, the immediate predecessor of Julius, were known in detail centuries later, when they were recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and Julius may well have been concerned that the legal deeds be safely kept. Sometimes evidence allows us to deduce the existence of records that are not directly known. Popes wrote letters to the suburbicarian bishops summoning them to councils, whereas the priests and deacons who attended synods of the Roman church were sometimes listed in order of seniority, so that we can occasionally see people working their way up as the years passed. At a synod held in 487, for example, a priest named Gordianus was 34th in rank, but was seventh in 495, and fourth in 499. The figures for the number of bishops, priests, and deacons the *Liber Pontificalis* credits each pope with ordaining will have been based on carefully maintained records, and so should be treated with respect.²³

The rich archives of the church allowed historians such as Bede, thanks to the work of his agent Nothelm, and Paul the deacon to incorporate material from them into their works, but more important was the ability of popes to

deploy the vast array of data they had at their fingertips, which made it easy for them to cite precedents and see that old practices were maintained. Whereas other sources of information were available, such as the libraries of the city of Rome in which Gregory I tried to find copies of a collection of the deeds of the martyrs allegedly written by Eusebius of Caesarea, popes can have had little need to go beyond the documents stored at the Lateran, where such recondite things as copies of the privileges of the church of Gallipoli that were not available in that church were on file. By the time of pope Gelasius the church maintained an account book in which all its revenues and outgoings were recorded; Gregory I altered the version of it that was current in his day when he increased the salary of one of the defenders who had acted well in difficult circumstances. Needless to say, popes saw to it that copies of their own works were filed away. When Leo came to write his Tome to Flavian in 449, he was able to draw on material from one of his earliest sermons, and copies of Gregory I's homilies were kept in the archive; the textual traditions suggest that both popes revised their addresses after delivering them. An annotator to the account of Gelasius provided in the *Liber Pontificalis* reports that in his day the works of that pope were held in the archive of the church; towards the end of the sixth century, arguments with a group of schismatics could be conducted on the basis of books and registers held in the church's depository.²⁴ A glimpse of archival practice in Rome is given by instructions that pope Felix IV gave the church of Ravenna: seven notaries who were subject to the orders of the bishop in all things were to keep the church's documents in a legal register. Copies of all documents were to be made, in case they were lost, old practices were to be adhered to, and documents relating to the patrimony were to bear the bishop's signature. But occasionally one suspects that the church may have been a prisoner of its records and its respect for them. Writing a letter commending a bishop to the people of Thuringia, Gregory II used the *Liber Diurnus* of the Roman church, a book of form letters that could be copied for standard correspondence. But the *Liber Diurnus* was itself quoting from a letter pope Gelasius had written, and Gregory's use of thirdhand material produced instructions of stunning irrelevance. When Gelasius wrote in the late fifth century Africans who were Manichaeans or who had been rebaptised were indeed a danger, but there was no need to warn people in Germany to be on their guard against them in the eighth century. Another strange appropriation of the past occurs at the beginning of the account of Gregory III in the *Liber Pontificalis*. It is easy to see that its encomium was an extended version of that which an earlier contributor to the text had provided for Leo II, but some parts of this had themselves been borrowed from descriptions of churchmen in Gaul that Gennadius of Marseilles had written towards the end of the fifth century. Of course the

passages may have been quoted because they were thought to express the characteristics of the persons to whom they were applied, but the people who transcribed them lived in a very bookish culture.²⁵

Only a tiny proportion of the vast sea of material that the church must once have kept survives. Such losses should impose wariness on scholars seeking to uncover its administration, as well as many other things; the strength of the administrative apparatus that we may deduce existed at an early date suggests that particular offices may have existed long before they are first referred to. Occasionally it is possible to see bureaucratic practice being sharpened, perhaps imitating changes in the practice of the secular bureaucracy. At the conclusion of a letter he wrote to the bishop of Tomis in 550, pope Vigilius indicated that it had been written in the 23rd year of the reign of Justinian and nine years after Basilus had been consul. This is the first surviving letter by a pope that is dated according to the year of an emperor's reign, a practice that Vigilius would use later. It reflected a change in procedure at the imperial chancery, after Justinian ordered in 537 that official documents were thereafter to be dated by the year of the reign of the emperor, as well as the traditional methods of the consuls of the year and the position of the year within the sequence of fifteen indictional years.²⁶ One sometimes has a feeling of people sitting in an office restlessly looking for ways to improve the quality of records. As time passed more popes bore the names of earlier popes, so that it could be difficult to tell them apart, and one author of the *Liber Pontificalis* introduced a practice new to that work by calling Leo II, who became pope in 682, and his successor Benedict II 'the younger', so distinguishing them from earlier popes who bore the same names. As the author of an epitome that extended to pope Conon (686–687) added the term 'the younger' to the account of John II in the original text, we can date the innovation with some precision. Learned stylists could turn up their noses at this way of referring to popes. In his *Life of Boniface*, the English author Willibald positioned pope Gregory II with reference to Gregory I and Gregory III, describing him as having been second from the first and before the last, also acknowledging that in the vulgar tongue of the Romans he was referred to as 'the younger'. But the authors of the *Liber Pontificalis* had ceased to follow the practice by the time Gregory II became pope.²⁷

The presence of so much written material makes it easy to forget that many things that must have been communicated orally are now completely lost to us. It would be very interesting to know, for example, about the messages transmitted in private by the people who carried letters. And more broadly, the Roman church, like every other organisation, possessed a body of material that circulated by word of mouth. This is now beyond our reach, apart from odd scraps in works such as the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, which suggest that

oral traditions may have been transmitted across three generations. A report that the senator Symmachus had been seen leading Theoderic to hell reached Gregory I from Julian, a defender of the Roman church, who had heard about it from the father of his father-in-law. When he was still a young layman Gregory had heard well-informed elderly people speak of a deacon, Paschasius, who had opposed Symmachus during the Laurentian schism and died without being reconciled to him. Gregory's practice of providing a chain of transmission for some of the stories he told that involved miracles may lie behind the similar practice Bede adopted when writing his *History*. Gregory was more vague as to the source of his information concerning a Roman pontiff who, having been led astray by flatterers, treated an itinerant preacher unjustly, and it is quite possible that the pope, whose name he suppressed out of politeness, was Agapetus. But some things could be passed on orally over longer periods. Gregory's awareness that he descended from someone who had been pope well over a century earlier probably reflects knowledge transmitted within his family, one whose practice in giving names suggests that it was very aware of tradition, rather than the church's institutional memory. Later, we shall consider evidence for traditions that were passed down for a period far longer than that.²⁸

From the East to the North

There lies before us the most radical change of direction the church of Rome has ever made, as it turned away from the east to face the north. People from the north of Europe found it natural to think of the Roman church as belonging to that continent, so that Columbanus was able to address Gregory I as a kind of flower of a drooping Europe, and Boniface IV as the most beautiful head of all the churches of the whole of Europe.²⁹ But this is not the context in which either of those popes placed themselves, and during the eighth century and beyond, the church of Rome maintained close ties with the east. Versions of stories about Gregory the Great told by his Latin biographer John the deacon appear in the *Bibliotheca* of the Byzantine author Photios, widely but not universally believed to have been written before the appearance of John's work. Despite the campaign against icons waged by a number of emperors in the eighth and ninth centuries, the cult of images was an area in which Rome came to have more in common with the east than it did with Gaul, a point of tension that found expression in the coolness of the Frankish church towards the second council of Nicaea that restored icons in 787. Within a few decades

of the death of the Persian martyr Anastasius in the early seventh century, his head was being venerated in Rome. The church of Sta Maria in Trastevere possessed an icon of Mary described as having been made through itself, an early example of the icons not made with hands (*acheiropoieta*) that were becoming known in the east at just that time. Someone in Rome produced a list of Roman emperors based on a chronicle written in the sixth century by a Greek author, John Malalas, in about 740, and a little later Greek nuns fleeing iconoclasm arrived in Rome with relics of S Gregory of Nazianzos, in whose honour a church was established. At about the same time pope Zacharias found the head of the martyr George in a small container. He was able to identify it because he also found a document, written in Greek letters, that explained what it was. The pope placed it in a diaconia, where many miracles occurred.³⁰

It is easy to accumulate evidence of this kind, but it relates to art and devotion rather than doctrine, and in this area divergences between the Christian East and West, in presuppositions as much as formal teaching, were becoming wider. And at a purely secular level, distances came to seem much longer during the seventh century. The stunning success of Arab armies after the death of the prophet Muhammad meant that, by halfway through the century, three of the five churches that Justinian had seen as constituting a pentarchy, those of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, were no longer part of the Empire. The invaders did not stop there, but made their way towards the royal city. The Byzantines survived the threat, but in its slimmed-down version the identity of their Empire would be more Greek and less cosmopolitan than it previously was. Pope Agatho's assertion to the authorities in Constantinople that his people extended as far as the lands by the ocean and that he was placed in the midst of Lombards, Slavs, Franks, Gauls, Goths, and Britons contained an element of boastfulness that the reduced circumstances of the Empire would have heightened. Moreover, as the long-distance shipping that had knitted together the disparate shores of the Mediterranean dried up during the seventh century, those who lived along its different shores reorientated themselves, so that lands that had formerly looked at each other across the water now turned to face their respective hinterlands. As the Mediterranean moved from being a centre to a backwater, the axis between popes and emperors that had been maintained across it became less securely grounded. And by the end of the seventh century, Africa had joined the list of territories conquered by the Arabs, shortly to be followed by Spain.³¹

Africa had been the intellectual centre of Latin-speaking Christianity. It is hard to imagine Western theology without Tertullian, Cyprian, and the immense figure of Augustine, and we have seen the leading role taken by African thinkers in resisting the policies of Justinian in the middle of the sixth

century. Africa was also distinguished by its long tradition of church councils, the earliest of which convened at the very time popes were beginning to issue decretals. The deliberations of its bishops circulated widely. By 567 a collection of African canons was known in Spain, and later found a place in an important Spanish collection of canons, the *Hispana*, whereas the only writings in Latin the council in Trullo professed to draw upon were the works of Cyprian and the canon of a council held under him. The bishops of Africa had long kept their distance from Rome. Two Africans were among the bishops who signed a letter sent to pope Leo defending the privileges the council of Chalcedon had given the church of Constantinople, despite Leo's objections, and a council held in Carthage not long before the Byzantine conquest had repeated earlier legislation that no-one was to dare to appeal from Africa to the Roman church. A little later the bishops of Africa excommunicated pope Vigilius. It becomes more difficult to detect the African church playing a prominent role during the seventh century, but its quietness may be more apparent than real. An unintended consequence of the Arab conquest of north Africa and the subsequent atrophy of Christianity there was the disappearance of the records on the basis of which the history of its church could be understood, and hence our knowledge of whatever links there were between it and Rome. Many of the letters written by popes during the seventh century that survive are connected with England. This need not indicate that England was particularly important, but rather results from the concern of people there to gather and preserve material emanating from Rome they found relevant to their own situations. The formidable ability of Victor of Vita to quote documents at length in his history of the Vandal persecution, and the command of detail the deacon Liberatus displayed in the *Breviarium* he wrote attacking the condemnation of the Three Chapters, suggest that the church of Carthage maintained extensive archives well into the sixth century, and we may presume it continued to do so thereafter. The apparent unimportance of Africa within the broader church during the seventh century is in part a consequence of the failure of evidence to survive. The church in the East continued to be aware of the situation of Christians in the territories that had been conquered, and the council in Trullo dealt with the problem caused by bishops in Africa and Libya who lived with their wives. But after the Arab conquest Africa seems to have floated away from the consciousness of the rest of the western church; by the time of Charlemagne Carthage could be thought of as having formerly bloomed with councils and mighty in its faith, but as being then subject to the yoke of barbarians, having been stripped naked of her former honour. It is hard to estimate the consequences for Western Christianity of the loss of a church with such powerful intellectual traditions and feisty independence, but its disappearance can only have been to the advantage of

the position of the church of Rome within the parts that remained.³²

Were this not enough, by the end of the second decade of the eighth century most of Spain had been overrun by forces of Berbers and Arabs. The concern of Visigothic kings to fashion their monarchy in imitation of that of the Empire, which allowed Toledo to appear as a little Constantinople whereas Canterbury was thought of as a scaled-down version of Rome, had caused problems for the popes. And whereas its traditions were not as strong as those of the African church, the immense output of Isidore of Seville early in the seventh century and that of a series of bishops of Toledo a little later suggest that by the end of that century the church of Spain had come to a position of intellectual leadership in the West. And as we have seen, the church in Spain was even more independent from Rome than that in Africa, for the attitude its bishops had displayed towards popes during the seventh century fell little short of arrogance. Rome may have cared more for Spain than Spain did for Rome. During the pontificate of pope Constantine a demon boasted in Rome that he had been in Spain, where he had caused many homicides and blood to be shed; he may have had in mind the coming of the Arabs and Berbers that was underway at just that time, and was certainly known in Rome. By the end of the eighth century, pope Hadrian wrote to the bishops of Spain of disquieting reports of Catholics enjoying overly close relations with Jews and unbaptised pagans. Placed under a non-Christian government, the Spanish church began to turn in on itself, and whereas its long-term future would be much brighter than that of the church in Africa, another part of the church in the West with the potential to cause trouble for Rome had been removed.³³

Astute contemporaries recognised the extent of the change the followers of Muhammad had brought about. By the early eighth century Bede was aware that the Saracens had come to weigh down all the length of Africa with their dominion, the greatest part of Asia, and some of Europe.³⁴ It is all too easy to interpret the developments that took place in the reach of the Roman church during the eighth century in terms of its strengthening connections with areas that were disposed to welcome its influence, in particular England and Gaul. But the way for this was prepared by a changed situation at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and more particularly the falling away of regions on its southern and northwestern coasts that had traditionally looked on Rome with much less warmth. The departure of these regions from significant involvement in the life of the wider church allowed the corridor to its northwest to become central to the world as seen from Rome. In a world of reduced possibilities, it would be the work of the popes who succeeded Constantine to reorientate the church in that direction.

In some ways, **Gregory II (19 May 715–11 February 731)** recalled an earlier style of being pope. He was the first for nearly 30 years to have been

born in Rome, or indeed mainland Italy, and like a number of his predecessors in the seventh century, had been brought up within the bishop's establishment. His family was well to do, his old home being large enough to be turned into a monastery when his mother, Honesta, died, and it may have placed him in the service of the church in the expectation that he would do well. If this had been the case, he did not disappoint them. Pope Sergius ordained him a subdeacon and appointed him to the offices of sacellarius and librarian; he is the first person known to have held the latter post. Thereafter he became a deacon, in which capacity he accompanied pope Constantine to the royal city. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he skilfully answered questions posed by the emperor Justinian, although this is not mentioned in the original text of the Life, which was being steadily updated while he was still alive, but is one of a series of additions that were made a few decades after Gregory died. One has the sense of people feeling they were living in the midst of important events it was necessary to write down immediately, and later wanted to expand. Only some of the manuscripts in which the *Liber Pontificalis* has come down to us record the date on which the popes from John VI had been buried, a circumstance that suggests that accounts were already being written while their subjects were alive; however, nothing prepares us for the scale of the account of Gregory II, which may have been written with an eye to readers outside Rome, for no-one in the city would have needed to be told that its river was named the Tiber. We have frequently encountered areas where the evidence of the *Liber Pontificalis* is suspect, and as it is the only source for many of the events in Gregory's pontificate we are forced to adopt the perspective of that text as we approach the issues; other people who were involved may have looked at things differently. But the urge to keep updating the text and later expand it is easily understood, for Gregory was one of the great popes.³⁵

Affairs within the city occupied a large part of his energies. A disaster struck when flood waters poured into it, first at its north, through the Porta Flaminia, now known as the Porta del Popolo, and then more widely as the embankments along the river were overtopped. Along the Via Lata, the main road leading from the Porta Flaminia towards the centre of the city, the waters rose to one and a half times the height of a human body. People's minds quickly turned to the crops. Disruptions in the production of food were always to be feared, and Rome had known hunger as recently as the first three years of the pontificate of Constantine. Gregory is the first pope known to have dealt with a flood, but the remedies of prayers and litanies he adopted were traditional. Litanies were a form of communal prayer that could express joy, as did those that were sung when pope Constantine arrived at Constantinople, but they could also be used to seek assistance in hard times. Gregory I had organised some when plague struck Rome, and others that were held when

heavy rain threatened crops after pope Adeodatus died were believed to have succeeded in propitiating the Lord. Gregory's endeavours were similarly successful, and on the eighth day the waters receded. But in other respects Gregory's activities fell outside the traditional areas of a bishop's responsibility. One of his first deeds on becoming pope was to order the burning of lime to restore the walls of the city, something Sisinnius had already tried to do. In the peaceful conditions of the fourth century equal amounts of lime had been used for the aqueducts and the repair of the walls of Rome, but in the eighth century the walls claimed it all. Gregory was unable to complete his project, but his successor Gregory III saw to the restoration of the greater part of the walls, using his own wealth rather than that of the church to pay for the workers' food and the limestone. About 100 years earlier, the energetic Honorius had established a mill by the city walls and undertaken works that brought water into the city; now another traditional responsibility of the state had passed to the pope. The steady passing of authority had found public expression in the time of Sergius, the first pope whose monogram is known to have appeared on silver coins minted there. Whatever secular authority remained in the city was becoming superfluous.³⁶

Gregory also developed a system that for some time had been providing relief to people in need. The Empire had long been concerned with feeding the needy among the inhabitants of the capital, and popes came to share the activity. In 600 Gregory I appointed one John, a layman to judge from his being described as a 'devout man', to be in charge of feeding the needy and providing what was described by the Greek word *diaconia*, or ministering. Establishments offering such a service already existed elsewhere in Italy, but this is the first one known in Rome. A book of ceremonies from the first half of the eighth century mentions the pope saying mass at a church that provided *diaconia*, and monasteries that provided it were among the good causes to which popes of the late seventh century left gifts. Gregory II is the first pope known to have provided for the ongoing expenses of a *diaconia*, the word now being used unambiguously for an establishment rather than an activity, for he gave that of S Eustachius a large amount of property which it would hold in perpetuity. Earlier popes may have done the same thing without our knowing it, but such institutions certainly became more important during the eighth century. A later pope is specified as having given vineyards and olive groves to other *diaconiae*. In an attempt to gain forgiveness of his sins, pope Leo III presented a silver crown or canister to each religious establishment in Rome that was dedicated to a saint, and a full listing of the institutions that benefitted from his largesse mentions 24 *diaconiae*, seven of them dedicated to Mary, 16 to other saints, and one that was associated with a charitable institution that offered hospitality, a *xenodochium*. Some were connected with

monasteries, which were becoming more integrated into the structure of the church at this time, and others with ordinary churches, although the exact nature of the association is unknown. It has been suggested that the notion of poor people was an invention of Christianity, and some historians have interpreted the *diaconiae* as expressions of a Christian impulse to charity; others have seen them as another area in which the church simply absorbed functions the state had earlier exercised. Perhaps both tendencies were operating. But whereas it is difficult to gain a sense of how they functioned, such charitable works had a political consequence. The many people who received largesse from the church, together with those involved in the systems that provided it, could be relied on to support any pope whose position was threatened.³⁷

Military events elsewhere in Italy also contributed to the growing authority of the pope. In 717 or 718 some Lombards gained control of the fortified site of Cumae, which occupied an important position on the main road linking Rome and Naples, being far closer to Naples than to Rome. It was a good time to strike at imperial territory, for at that time Constantinople was again blockaded by a force of Arabs. The activity of the Saracens was certainly known in Rome, and may have prompted the Lombards to act when they did. The loss of Cumae was felt keenly by the Byzantine duke of Naples, and Gregory sought its return; but threats of divine wrath and promises of gifts failed to move its conquerors. Undeterred, the pope organised a force led by the duke, the subdeacon John, and an unnamed rector, which attacked the fortress by night. They prevailed, although Gregory was obliged to make a payment, probably to the Lombard duke of Benevento, of 70 lbs of gold. We are not told who subsequently held the fortress, but are better informed in a later case, after a force of Lombards occupied another strategically located fortress, that at Sutri, some 50 km north of Rome, and went on to hold it for 140 days. Gregory responded on this occasion with an energetic diplomatic campaign, sending king Liutprand many communications and gifts, after which, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the king restored it and made a donation of it to the apostles Peter and Paul. But these words are misleading, for Liutprand did not effect a restoration. In making a donation (the word is the same one that was used for the document by which king Aripert restored part of the church's patrimony, and must refer to a legally binding document), he was transferring a military asset of the duchy of Rome, and hence the Byzantine Empire, to the ownership of the church. Later, when pope Gregory III gained control of a fortress named Gallese, located on the main road to Ravenna, he is said to have ordered that it be joined to the structure of the holy state. The term is abstract, but it suggests that people were starting to think of the lands of the church as forming an autonomous unit. There is no

need to think of a plan being worked out, for the developments were haphazard, and their implications probably escaped those who participated in them. But here we stand at the threshold of the formation of what have been called the papal estates, a block of territory in which the pope would be not only a spiritual leader but the head of state. Now shrunk to the Vatican City and some smaller pieces of property, its fluctuating fortunes would be a major theme in Italian history. The early eighth century was pregnant with possibilities.³⁸

Yet the Empire that found it hard to hold onto its territory remained capable of striking at the pope. Two of its officials plotted with a subdeacon to kill Gregory, with the tacit approval of the duke of Rome, but were unable to find an opportunity. The arrival of a new exarch, Paul, led them to try again, but when the people of Rome found out what was afoot they killed two of the plotters, whereas the third was made a monk. The emperor then instructed Paul to kill the pope, whom he blamed for preventing the collection of taxes, to plunder the churches of their wealth, and put someone else in Gregory's place. The exarch sent a member of the imperial bodyguard from Ravenna to arrest Gregory, but the people of Rome and Lombards who came from all directions met at the Milvian Bridge, the point at which those travelling from Ravenna crossed the river before they entered the city, not far from the site of Constantine's decisive victory just over 400 years previously. Finding himself unable to enter the city, the officer was forced to retreat in ignominy. A situation that no-one could have predicted was coming about, in which a pope, secure in his position within Rome, would enjoy support from at least some of the Lombards against the exarch.³⁹

But worse was to follow, for Leo III, a military man who had become emperor in 717, issued an order that no-one was to possess an icon of a saint, a martyr, or an angel. He informed Gregory that if he agreed to this policy he would enjoy his favour, but should he oppose it, he would be cast from office, as would indeed happen four years later to a patriarch of Constantinople who opposed the policy. Icons had come to play an important part in Christian cult, in Rome as elsewhere, and Gregory is described as proceeding to arm himself against the emperor as if against an enemy, telling all Christians to be on their guard against the wickedness that had arisen. The soldiers in imperial service turned against the emperor, and sought to extricate themselves from the authority of Paul. Indeed, it was said that they planned to elect a new emperor and proceed with him to Constantinople; however, Gregory dissuaded them from such a radical undertaking. The Byzantine duke of Naples, Exhilaratus, and his son Hadrian, who had been excommunicated some years earlier for marrying the widow of a deacon, did their best to persuade the people to obey the emperor and kill the pope, but they were caught by the Romans and

themselves killed. The exarch Paul was also killed, and numerous towns and fortified places transferred themselves to the authority of the Lombards. Whereas we should be sceptical at the possibility of supporters of the Three Chapters preferring to be under Lombard rather than imperial power in the sixth century, such a situation had now come to pass. A patrician sent by the emperor to kill Gregory met with no better fortune, and only the pope's intervention prevented the Romans from killing him. An attempt to turn the king and dukes of the Lombards against the pope was similarly unsuccessful, for the Romans and Lombards bound themselves together as brothers in the faith. Despite such extreme provocations, Gregory encouraged the people to persist in love towards the Roman Empire and their faith in it.⁴⁰

Such a situation was too good an opportunity for king Liutprand (712–744) to pass by. Described in the prologue of a law as ‘the most excellent king of the most happy, catholic and God-beloved race of the Lombards’, he was the most energetic of the Lombard kings, whose ambitions far outstripped scattered fortresses.⁴¹ Gregory had been receiving support from the Lombard dukes of Benevento and Spoleto, against whom Liutprand entered into an alliance with the enfeebled Byzantine exarch Eutychios. In 728 he led an army southwards and, having settled matters in Spoleto to his liking, proceeded to Rome with hostile intent, where he established himself on what had become known as the Field of Nero, on the right bank of the Tiber. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes Gregory going forth to meet him, and so prevailing upon Liutprand that the king threw himself down at the pope's feet and promised to put aside previous ideas of harm. The language employed to describe the action performed by Liutprand is different to that used of the manner in which pope Constantine had been received by Justinian II, but suggests something along the same lines. The king took off pieces of his clothing and put them before the body of the apostle, and, having prayed, withdrew. The later version of the *Liber Pontificalis*'s account of Gregory itemises what the king laid down: a cloak, corslet, sword-belt, broad sword, and pointed sword, all gilded, with a golden crown and a silver cross. It also describes the king asking Gregory to receive peaceably his ally the exarch, who may have been present in Rome, but if he was he played no significant part in the negotiations. The pope said he would do this, apparently without relinquishing his opposition to the policy of iconoclasm the exarch must have felt duty-bound to uphold, whereupon the king withdrew. His departure may have been ignominious, but he remained free to deal with Gregory's allies, the dukes. The real loser had been the exarch. When a claimant to the imperial throne appeared in Italy and began gathering support, it was Gregory who organised a military force to deal with him, and following its success the transmission to Constantinople of the head of the defeated aspirant, a procedure with which people must have been becoming all

too familiar at the time. Gregory, or his successor, also displayed loyalty when, at some time during the period 723–735, he was in touch with the duke of Venetia, asking that he help bring Ravenna, which Lombards had captured, back to what he referred to as the holy republic, and subjection to the emperors. That the defence of the Empire's position in Italy had come to depend on someone the emperor had tried to have assassinated, and who opposed his policy of iconoclasm, was a sign of how weak it had become.⁴²

These were not Gregory's only dealings with the broader world. In 716 the Bavarian duke Theudo and other prominent members of his people visited Rome, and Gregory later sent a bishop, a priest, and a subdeacon to Bavaria to establish a church hierarchy there. Nothing immediately came from this venture, which may have reflected the political interests of Theudo and Gregory, the former seeking to strengthen his position against powerful neighbours, the Franks to the west and Lombards to the south, and the latter envisaging an alliance that could be used against Liutprand.⁴³ Churchmen in the north of Italy continued to cause problems. In 723 Gregory granted the pallium to the bishop of Friuli, also known as the patriarch of Aquileia, at the request of the Lombard king, specifying that he was not to usurp the rights of the bishop of Grado, but before long he was writing to the patriarch Donatus of Grado, various bishops, duke Marcellus, and the people of Venetia and Istria warning them that the bishop of Friuli wanted to take over the rights of the church of Grado. Following the death of Donatus, his see was occupied by Peter, the bishop of Pola, a move that contradicted the principle that a bishop was not to transfer to another see. Nevertheless, Gregory was prepared to forgive the miscreant, and in accordance with the desire of those to whom he was writing was prepared to order that Peter return as bishop of Pola, and allow them to choose a worthy bishop of Grado.⁴⁴

But the range of Gregory's activities extended further afield. In 718 a man from Devon, Wynferth, set out on the long journey to Rome, armed with a letter of recommendation from the bishop of Winchester. Having crossed the Alps and been well received by the Lombards, he and his party completed their journey at S Peter's basilica, which they entered with joy, seeking the annulment of their sins. Gregory received them in a kindly fashion, and on 15 May 719 he directed Wynferth to go to the fierce peoples of Germany for the purpose of preaching. Just as Willibrord had after his first visit to Rome, Wynferth and his companions departed with a large number of relics, again breaking their journey to visit the hospitable Liutprand. Having made his way to the north, Wynferth spent some time working with his fellow Englishman Willibrord, whom pope Sergius had appointed archbishop of the Frisians, and then moved to Hesse. Ideas were entertained that he might succeed Willibrord, but Wynferth felt that, as he was carrying out a commission from Gregory to

the German peoples and performing a legation of the apostolic see to the western regions of the barbarians, he would have to gain the approval of the apostolic see. In 722 or 723 Wynferth returned to Rome. After he had visited S Peter's to pray and taken a rest, he was received by Gregory in that basilica.⁴⁵

At this point, an unexpected difficulty occurred. Quizzed by Gregory about the creed and the tradition of the faith of the church, subjects that had apparently not been raised at their first meeting, Wynferth was nonplussed, alleging that he was unfamiliar with the way in which the pope's household spoke, and asked to be allowed to submit a written account of what he believed. Their difficulty in communicating is surprising, for each was a learned man, Wynferth being capable of writing letters in correct Latin, and Gregory having been a librarian. The difficulty arose when they tried to speak to each other, for the way in which Latin was pronounced in Rome was increasingly diverging from the way in which it was written. In the voluminous writings of Gregory I we can detect signs of a difference between written and spoken Latin. In his letters, the word for 'all' occurs with equal frequency in its nominative and genitive singular form and its accusative singular form (*omnis*, *omnem*), but in the Homilies on the Gospels the first form is at least 10 times as common as the second.⁴⁶ It is not hard to explain the disparity, for in spoken Latin the accusative form had come to be pronounced in a way that was easily confused with the same form of the word for a human being (*hominem*), and so was best avoided in speech, whereas it could safely be used in writing, where there was no possibility of confusion. In England, however, people pronounced Latin words in the way they were written.

Entering the Lateran some days later, Wynferth prostrated himself before Gregory's feet, to be told that his teaching was sound. He was given the honour of being asked to sit beside the pope, and on 30 November, the feast of S Andrew, a saint indirectly associated with Rome by virtue of being Peter's brother, Gregory ordained him a bishop and gave him a book containing the laws of the church. We are told by his biographer that on this occasion the pope gave him a new name, Boniface, although this is unlikely, as people had been addressing him by it for several years. However he came by it, Wynferth gives the impression of having been delighted with his new name, unlike Willibrord, who does not seem to have used the name given him by Sergius. He swore an oath to Peter, his vicar Gregory, and his successors that was based on the oath newly appointed suburbicarian bishops swore to the pope, although it omitted a passage in which he promised not to consent to anything being done against the emperor, a consideration scarcely likely to be relevant where he was going, and added one, according to which Boniface promised to avoid dealings with bishops acting contrary to what the old fathers had laid

down; if he were unable to stop their behaviour, he would tell the pope.⁴⁷ Having completed these formalities, and armed with a letter of introduction to the Frankish duke Charles, who had succeeded Willibrord's protector Pippin as mayor of the palace of the Merovingian king, he departed for Hesse. His would be a long career, spent in different areas.

As it turned out a lot of Boniface's energies were spent not in preaching the gospel to non-believers but dealing with wayward Christians. Modern scholars have frequently commented that he ended up doing something different to what he had originally thought he would be doing, but people in the eighth century did not think in terms of missionaries, and Boniface may not have seen things in this light. The word most commonly used by popes to describe what Boniface was doing was preaching. As we have noticed already, this was an activity on which Gregory I had had a great deal to say, and he almost always used the word for something that was directed towards Christians, so that for someone who saw his function as that of a preacher, spending most of his time preaching to Christians need not have involved a major diversion from what he had initially hoped to do.⁴⁸ Another way in which his role could be understood was that of legate; he wrote to pope Stephen, that he had been discharging a legation for 26 years. This too was a function generally discharged among Christians.⁴⁹ But in his dealings with Christians, Boniface found many things that were not to his liking, which he suspected popes did not treat seriously enough.

He was unhappy about people who married close relatives. In his *History*, Bede reproduced a letter in which Gregory I ruled that people could marry those three or four degrees removed from themselves, but no-one to whom they were related more closely, whereas marriages to a stepmother or sister-in-law were not acceptable. Problems had arisen when people in irregular situations had become Christians, and Gregory ruled that whereas they were to be told to abstain from sexual relations, they were not to be denied communion. Boniface could not believe that Gregory had been so lenient, and had the papal register examined to see whether such a letter could be found. He was not surprised to be told that no such letter could be located, whereupon he concluded, falsely it seems, that the letter Bede included in his *History* was a forgery.⁵⁰ Gregory's broadmindedness would later astonish another Englishman. Writing to his old friend Leander of Seville, Gregory recommended that although it was his own practice to immerse candidates for baptism three times, given that heretics in Spain had been baptising by threefold immersion, people should be plunged into the water only once. Alcuin, who was then arguing against other people in Spain who believed that baptism should be performed with just one immersion, was horrified to learn of Gregory's lackadaisical attitude. A search for a letter of Gregory expressing

this view had failed to turn one up, leading Alcuin to fear that it had been written by someone else.⁵¹

Another problem was created by a priest, utterly ignorant of Latin, who baptised according to the formula: 'In the name Fatherland and Daughter and of the Holy Spirit'. Boniface, a stickler for propriety, felt that in such cases the baptism should be repeated, but pope Zacharias was prepared to tolerate them, the incorrect formula having been used through ignorance of Latin rather than heretical intent. Use of the wrong words in administering baptism was an old problem. Centuries earlier, a funny story had been told of an anti-Nicene bishop who said 'Barbas baptizes you in the name of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit', at which words the vessel containing the water that was to be used for the baptism fell apart. Pope Vigilius had castigated one particular formula: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit'. Unfortunately the New Testament did not provide conclusive evidence for the proper formula, for whereas Christ had mandated baptism in the name of the Trinity (Matt 28: 19), Peter had told people to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2: 38). Pope Pelagius I was among those who held that baptism in the name of the Trinity was essential, but in the ninth century pope Nicholas I was prepared to accept baptism in the name of Christ. Boniface's enquiry falls within this somewhat murky area, but, as in the matter of marriage, his position was clearly more strict than that of the pope, and he may have felt let down by Zacharias, for Gregory II had been insistent that he was to baptise according to the formula used in Rome. Moreover, adulterous and fornicating Frankish clergy had come back from Rome claiming they had been given permission to officiate. Boniface found himself placed in an awkward position, for he had never heard of the apostolic see giving judgment contrary to canonical decrees. Later, pope Zacharias was understandably upset to hear that Boniface had been accusing him of corrupting the canons, seeking to annul the traditions of the fathers, and bestowing pallia in exchange for money. Letters from Boniface cannot always have been received with enthusiasm in Rome.⁵²

Yet he remained the faithful servant of three popes. When Gregory III entered office in 731 Boniface sent messengers assuring the pope of his loyalty; Gregory responded by sending him the pallium of an archbishop, gifts, and relics of various saints. In 737 or 738 he travelled to Rome again, to take counsel with Gregory, and mysteriously spent a year there. On the way home he stopped at Pavia, where he was honourably received by his old friend Liutprand. Zacharias had not long been pope when, early in 742, a long congratulatory letter arrived from Boniface, in which he informed the pope of changes he had made to the administrative structure of the church, and asked the pope to confirm the new arrangements.⁵³ In a sign of political developments, he mentioned that the Frankish duke Carloman had asked him

to summon a synod in the territory under his authority. Boniface believed that the area was one in which the church had been treated badly for 60 or 70 years, and he sought Zacharias's backing for the endeavour, claiming that the Franks had not held a synod, not had an archbishop, for over 80 years. In the first matter he was incorrect, for a bishop of Auxerre had presided over a council in 692, but compared to their confreres in Spain the bishops north of the Pyrenees had certainly been lethargic. Councils duly began to be held, that were dated not according to the regnal year of the emperor but in accordance with the years that had passed since the Incarnation, a method that had become popular among the English.⁵⁴

One of the most distinguished popes of the period, on his death Gregory left 2,160 solidi to the clergy, the monasteries that offered diaconia, and the vergers, and 1,000 for the lights at S Peter's.⁵⁵ He is the first pope since John V known to have acted in this way, and the sum he made available was more generous than those that popes of the seventh century had left behind them. Perhaps we can see here a sign of personal wealth, as well as a form of goodwill such as would have been appropriate in a pope who, exceptionally for the period, had been born in Rome. But it would be easy to overestimate the degree to which the run of eastern popes had steered the church in a different direction to that it would have taken had the popes been of Roman origin.

Gregory III (13 March 731–10 December 741), a Syrian in origin and apparently a wealthy man, hit the ground running. Reports were reaching Rome that the emperor Leo and his son Constantine had begun a violent persecution, taking down and destroying holy images of Christ, the holy Mother of God, the Holy Apostles, and all the saints and confessors. A priest, Gregory, was sent to the royal city with a letter of warning, but was afraid to deliver it, perhaps thinking of what had happened to other members of the Roman church who told emperors what they did not want to hear, and brought it back to Rome. The angry pope wanted to deprive him of his priestly rank, but, having been dissuaded by a council and some leading men, he directed the hapless Gregory to return to Constantinople with an expanded version of the letter. On reaching Sicily, however, traditionally a point in their journeys when churchmen making their way from Rome first encountered the power of the emperor, he was detained and not permitted to travel further. Gregory thereupon decided to hold a major council, which met on 1 November 731. It was well attended, there being present the bishops of the churches of Grado and Ravenna, which had often experienced strained relations with Rome. In his strongly worded letter of invitation to the former, whom he addressed as archbishop, and the bishops under him, Gregory pointed out that in Constantinople images were being cast down and churches used for secular purposes. He feared that, such was the need to defend the faith, it would be

necessary for people to lay down their bodies and shed their blood. The attendance of the bishop of Ravenna suggests that even the bishop of the city where the imperial headquarters in Italy were located had turned against the Empire. Gregory presided over a meeting of 93 bishops from what were described as the western regions, and all the members of the Roman clergy. In addition, people described as consuls, together with the rest of the Christian people, were standing in attendance. No earlier Roman synod is described as having this degree of lay involvement, and Gregory was clearly aiming to carry the people with him, although this may not have been difficult, for the inhabitants of Rome seem increasingly to have identified their interests with that of its church. The council took a firm line that it expressed in strong language: Whoever laid aside, destroyed, profaned, or blasphemed against the venerable holy images of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, of his Mother, the ever-Virgin, immaculate and glorious Mary, of the blessed apostles and all the saints would be banished from communion and the unity and structure of the whole church. Gregory sent further correspondence to the emperor, but again his messenger was detained in Sicily, this time for almost a year. A body described as the entire generality of the province of Italy is said to have written to the authorities; however we interpret this abstraction, we are again being invited to see lay opinion siding with Gregory. But the messengers were detained for eight months in Sicily, and then sent home. Gregory then sent another letter, but we do not know its fate.⁵⁶

Faced with Leo's frustrating refusal to consider his views, Gregory summoned another synod that met on 12 April 732, Palm Sunday. It is known to us in far more detail than the earlier one, for its proceedings have been transmitted in two versions, one found in manuscripts and the other in copies of an inscription, no longer extant, that was engraved across three pieces of marble; the two sources seem to depend on a common original text. This council was a much smaller one, attended by only seven bishops who came from towns in the immediate hinterland of Rome, Velletri, Albano, Castiglione, Ostia, Silva Candida, Palestrina, and Porto. Their proximity to Rome gave them an importance out of all proportion to the towns in which they were based, for in accordance with long tradition three of them, the bishops of Albano, Porto, and Ostia, enjoyed the privilege of ordaining popes, whereas two of them, the bishops of Silva Candida and Porto, had accompanied pope Constantine to the royal city.⁵⁷ A synod that met in 745 to deal with false teachers in the intimate surroundings of the chapel John IV and Theodore had placed in the Lateran was attended by bishops from the same sees, with one substitution, the bishop of Mentana replacing that of Albano. Perhaps the bishops constituted a kind of kitchen cabinet, to which popes could readily turn. Whereas the synod made no theological pronouncements, both its actions and the place where it

convened were significant. It met in a chapel Gregory had built, presumably in some haste, in S Peter's, in honour of the Saviour, the holy Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary our Lady, and the Holy Apostles, in addition to the martyrs and confessors of Christ and of the perfect righteous ones; relics of those who were resting throughout the world were placed in it. It is an impressive list of dedicatees, one whose similarity to the list of those whose icons were being destroyed in the East suggests that a formal system of ranking had been adopted. The council ratified arrangements for liturgical celebrations in the chapel for which three monasteries were to be responsible, and for a priest to say there a mass with special prayers after a first mass had been said nearby before the body of S Peter. Monasticism has been an unstable element in Christian history, and at this time monks were becoming more prominent in the liturgical life of the city, although it is possible that they were accommodating themselves to the practices of the secular clergy rather than diffusing monastic ways of doing things. Gregory made generous offerings to the chapel, among them many implements of gold and silver and a golden crown, from which a cross hung, with jewels. Perhaps the crown had been offered to the church, for it sounds exactly like a votive crown of the Visigothic king Reccesuinth (649–672), part of a treasure of similar items discovered in Spain in the 19th century, and the golden crown Clovis was said to have sent to a pope early in the sixth century may have been similar. He also installed in the chapel an icon of the Virgin, on which he placed a golden diadem with jewels, a golden necklace with jewels from which other jewels hang down, and earrings with six precious stones. Not for the first time in Rome, Mary was being thought of as an empress, and it is possible that Gregory, a wealthy man, paid for it out of his own resources. Such an image was not calculated to please an emperor who was destroying icons; neither was the way in which the date was expressed in the proceedings of the council, for the year given was the indictional year, rather than the year of the emperor's reign, as had been customary. Could it be that the church did not recognise the emperor?⁵⁸

Some years earlier, the exarch Eutychios had sent someone to Rome bearing orders that Gregory II was to be killed, but such hostility had been set aside by the time he brought to S Peter's a most unusual gift, six twisted columns of onyx that were placed adjacent to some older ones, which they resembled. The earlier set, columns made of porphyry that were placed above the tomb of Peter, had been donated by Constantine. Onyx, a variety of quartz through which different colours run, was a prized material that had been used for the columns bearing a golden arch that pope Hilary placed above a portion of the Cross in the chapel he built in honour of it in the Lateran. It is not often that one finds an exarch doing something good for the church, and surprising that he did this in a period of deep hostility between the emperor whose servant he

was and the pope. Perhaps Eutychios was making a statement as to where his loyalties lay. Gregory clad the columns in silver, on which could be seen pictures of the Saviour and the apostles on one side and pictures of the Mother of God and the holy virgins on the other. The columns, which the twisted columns Bernini later designed to stand over the altar that was above the burial place of Peter were intended to recall, were free of any iconic materials, but by placing pictures around them Gregory yet again emphasised his adherence to the cult of icons.⁵⁹

Faced with Gregory's defiance of his iconoclastic policy, to which the increasingly aggressive territorial policy of the church would have been a further cause of annoyance had he known of it, Leo retaliated. A fleet that a Byzantine historian supposed had been sent against the pope, although it may in reality have been aimed against the Lombards, suffered shipwreck in the Adriatic. More effective was the transfer of the churches in Sicily, Calabria, and Illyricum from the authority of the pope to that of the patriarch of Constantinople. This act was to have an odd reflection in hagiography, for during the eighth and early ninth centuries Greek writers in Sicily and southern Italy wrote a series of works purporting to show that Peter, or popes, had been responsible for sending the people who founded churches in those areas. Whereas the authors of these works did not deny the importance of the emperor, their deployment of the notion of sees having been founded by Rome points to disquiet at their having been removed from the oversight of that church. Leo also seized the great patrimonies of the Roman church. The impact of this may have been severe, for although this was a period in which people tended to consume goods produced locally, Rome, with its highly developed system of welfare, may have been an exception. Such things as the pieces of timber from Calabria that Gregory II had recently used to repair the roof of S Paul's could no longer be acquired from the church's estates. That fewer coins were minted in Rome, and these devalued, suggests a depressed economy.⁶⁰

But Gregory had other worries. King Liutprand returned to Rome with his army and, just as he had done in the time of Gregory II, he set up camp in the Field of Nero. But he was now unmistakably hostile, plundering the country about the city and forcing many noble Romans to shave and dress in the style of Lombards. We have an idea what this may have involved, for queen Theodelinda had erected a palace showing Lombards who arranged their hair in a highly distinctive way and wore clothes of various colours that resembled those of the English. It was an act of remarkable aggression that symbolically turned Romans into Lombards, and occurred at a time when Gregory could anticipate even less help than usual from the Empire. Whereas Gregory issued coins that showed a bust of the emperor Leo on the obverse and the letters GREO on the reverse, his loyalty was residual, and in a time of great need he

looked elsewhere for help. The Franks had disappointed popes in the past, for Vigilius's hope that Childebert would write on behalf of the church to king Totila seems to have been thwarted, whereas Pelagius II had derived no real benefit from his attempts to obtain aid from the Franks. But the need was great, and in 739 Gregory sent two representatives, bishop Anastasius and a priest Sergius, by ship to Gaul, to seek the help of Charles Martel, the mayor of the palace.⁶¹

The legates made their way by sea, bearing keys from the tomb of Peter, a link from his chains, and many presents. The gifts caused a stir in Gaul, where it was said that no-one had ever heard of or seen such things before, although Gregory's gifts do not seem to have been greater than those Gregory I had sent to people whose goodwill was sought. The emissaries proposed a deal, whereby the pope would no longer be on the side of the emperor but join that of Charles. They probably carried with them the letter that constitutes the first item in the *Liber Carolinus*, a compilation that Charlemagne had made in 791, when he ordered that the letters sent by the apostolic see to Charles Martel and his son Pippin were to be freshly copied, so that evidence of these matters would be available to later rulers; copies of letters from the Empire were also to be made, but none of these survive. The implication that the letter stands at the head of momentous developments is true, although it would take some time for them to work out. Its address was simple: 'To the lord, his most excellent son Charles the under-king, Gregory the pope'. Describing Charles as the beloved son of blessed Peter, the leader of the apostles, as well as his own son, Gregory sought his help in defending the church of God and his special people, for they were unable to bear the persecution and oppression of the Lombards, who had gone so far as to take from St Peter's the lights that Charles and his ancestors had offered there. The letter is extremely short, and has nothing to say about the church leaving the emperor's side, but Gregory stated that the person who took it would pour all his sorrows into Charles's ears more fully. The reference to God's special (*peculiaris*) people picked up a phrase in the Bible that was used of the chosen people (Deut 14: 2) and thereafter, according to some translations of the Bible into Latin, but not the Vulgate, the Christian people (Tit 2:14 and more particularly I Pet 2: 9), but it is clear that Gregory thought of the people as being Peter's. No less than Leo I had done, Gregory III was prepared to narrow the focus of a broad term, so that it referred to the church of Rome. Charles responded by sending two of his followers to Rome, abbot Grimo of Corbie and Sigibert, a monk from the monastery that had been founded in the seventh century at the place where Dionysius was believed to have been buried just outside Paris, St Denis, who bore gifts for the pope. However, we do not know the outcome of their mission.⁶²

At the end of 739, or the beginning of 740, one of Charles's followers, Anthas, was in Rome, and when he returned Gregory used him to convey a second letter to Charles, longer and more strongly worded that employed a variety of rhetorical strategies. The pope wrote of the tears that continually poured from his eyes night and day because of the problems the Lombard kings Liutprand and his nephew Hildeprand, who had become joint king in 735, were causing near Ravenna, whereas near Rome buildings were being destroyed and herds carried away. These may seem trivial events, but the set-piece battles we may think of as characterising medieval warfare were not necessarily the most important means by which wars were waged in that period, for the wearing down of an enemy's productive capacity could be devastating, and if the centring of the church's estates on Rome and the drive to exploit its holdings more effectively that are known to have been underway in the time of the following pope had already been initiated such losses would have been even more keenly felt. But Charles had failed to help the special people, a term used insistently in this letter. Liutprand was also troubling the dukes of Spoleto and Benevento, who had refused to make war on the church. And so Gregory, addressing Charles by the slightly cajoling honorific title 'your goodness', implored him, in the presence of the Lord and the fearsome judgment, to help the church of S Peter and his special people, by driving back the kings, repelling them, and ordering them to return to their own places; were he responsive, the leader of the apostles would not close the heavenly kingdoms to him. Such language, implying that Peter the key bearer could prevent Charles from entering heaven, could be construed as intimidating, but towards the end of the letter Gregory's language became stronger: 'I conjure you in the living and true God and these most sacred keys of the burial place of the apostle Peter which I am sending as a kind of request, not to place friendship with the kings of the Lombards before love for the leader of the apostles, but hasten to our defence.' The notion of conjuring was a powerful one, for the Life of a saint written in the sixth century describes a dead person using the words 'I conure you through the Lord' to preface a request to be allowed to return to the perpetual quiet from which he had been disturbed. It also had sinister overtones, for a young man who wanted to marry the daughter of a pope was said to have gone to Sicily and made an act of conjuring in the name of a demon. Whereas Gregory lived long before the time of the magicians who conjured evil spirits by using powerful names, and the assistance he hoped for was that of the mayor of the palace rather than demonic forces, he was employing a powerful formula, using a name of God drawn from the Bible (1 Tim 2: 4). But Charles seems to have been unmoved by such appeals. Gregory could only become the friend of Charles if the latter accepted the pope; but he had good reason not to. Not long before king

Liutprand had received locks of the hair of his son Pippin, thereby symbolically becoming his father, the Lombards had been his allies in a great victory he had won over the Saracens at the battle of Poitiers in 732. It was not the time to renounce his ties with the Lombards.⁶³

Gregory also undertook building projects for which there was no parallel in the preceding century, giving the impression of making up for lost time and of having unlimited resources at his command. In addition to the richly ornamented chapel in which the synod of 732 had met, he made improvements at Sta Maria Maggiore, among other things placing there a golden image of the Virgin holding the Saviour in her arms. He built one monastery and renewed another, bestowing estates on both of them; in the former he placed a boy, newly arrived from Sicily, who would become pope Stephen III in 768. Among his benefactions to another church that cannot be identified was the silvering of an ancient image of the Virgin. New churches were built and significant restorations were carried out on a number of old ones, the roof of the Pantheon was repaired, another church dedicated to the Virgin extended, work was carried out on a diaconia at S Peter's, and the roof of S Paul's was repaired. Expenditure on such a scale gives the impression that the church of Rome suddenly found itself wealthy, and it has been convincingly argued that the accelerating building program usually associated with the Carolingian period in Rome really began with Gregory, in the 730s.⁶⁴

Zacharias (3 December 741–15 March 752), the subject of the longest account of any pope in our period in the *Liber Pontificalis*, was another Greek. A later Byzantine author believed he had been an Athenian, and his translation of a Latin text into Greek reveals occasional failures to understand the language in which it had been written. His horizons were certainly broad, for in front of the Lateran offices he placed a representation of the world that was decorated with various short verses. A learned man who, prior to becoming pope, had kept a library of liturgical books in his home, he pointed towards the scholarly revival that lay ahead. But the beginning of his time in office was extremely difficult.⁶⁵

He had to confront the complete failure of his predecessor's policies towards the Lombards. After Liutprand took the town of Spoleto, its duke took refuge within Rome. The king was not prepared to take this lying down, and occupied four towns that belonged to the duchy of Rome. Zacharias had to deal with a grim reality: The Lombard dukes with whom the church had allied itself against Liutprand were doing badly, Charles Martel had disdained Gregory's attempts to gain him as an ally, and the exarch was powerless against Liutprand. Gregory's policies having misfired, Zacharias overthrew them, and initiated discussions with Liutprand. In 742 he set forth to a meeting with the king at Terni. Given the reluctance of popes to move beyond Rome, the

journey was significant, and Liutprand treated it accordingly, for he sent dukes and a military force to meet Zacharias at Narni, eight miles from Terni, and escort him for the rest of his journey. The king and pope greeted each other warmly, and in the course of negotiations on the following day Liutprand agreed to restore the four towns he had taken, to return patrimonies that had been taken from the church nearly 30 years earlier, to enter into a peace that would last for 20 years, and to return captives, among whom may have been the archbishop of Ravenna. After mass on Sunday the pope invited Liutprand to dinner, which turned out to be a very happy occasion, the king declaring that he could not remember a time when he had eaten so much. Such a rapprochement was extraordinary, and Liutprand provided a force to escort Zacharias around the four cities that, one by one, were passed into his hands. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes the pope on this occasion as passing through the territory of the state (*respublica*), an indication that the territory under the pope was seen as a political unit.⁶⁶

But Liutprand retained the initiative, and good relations were not to last. In the following year the king invaded the exarchate and prepared to besiege Ravenna. The exarch and the archbishop of the city asked Zacharias to intervene, but a legation he sent to Liutprand was not well received, and so the pope, described as acting like a true shepherd and not a hireling, proceeded to Ravenna. According to one version of the *Liber Pontificalis*, a cloud covered him and his party by day, and we are presumably meant to remember the cloud that covered the tabernacle by day during the journeying of Moses (Num 9: 16; both the biblical and papal narratives involve tents at this point). The exarch met him 50 miles from the city, the distance he was prepared to travel doubtless an indication of his need for support, and as Zacharias entered it a throng of people of different ages cried out: 'Welcome to our shepherd, who has left his own sheep and come to free us, who were about to perish.' The welcome recalls that extended to Christ when he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and also Christ in his capacity as the good shepherd, who brought sheep from other sheepfolds (John 10: 16), and was a shepherd rather than a hireling (John 10: 12). The histrionic claim of the *Liber Pontificalis* that Zacharias would not have hesitated to lay down his life for the salvation of the Roman people is another example of this, for the good shepherd was prepared to lay down his life for his sheep (John 10: 11). This is not the first time that the *Liber Pontificalis* described a pope in language the Bible used of Christ, but never before had it done so with such intensity. From Ravenna the pope travelled into Lombard territory, reaching the capital, Pavia, on 28 June, the day before the church commemorated the birthday of S Peter; in earlier times it had been known as the birthday of Peter and Paul, but the latter had fallen out of the picture. Having officiated at a liturgy held in a church outside the

wall, Zacharias entered the city. He prevailed upon the unwilling Liutprand to renounce most of his gains. Zacharias returned to Rome, only to begin a campaign of prayer, asking God to save the people of Ravenna and Rome from the treachery and persecution of Liutprand. The king duly died before his appointed time, and his successor, duke Ratchis of Friuli (744–749), agreed to a peace of 20 years.⁶⁷

Alas, the period of peace turned out to be much shorter than Zacharias anticipated. The Lombards were becoming increasingly edgy. In 746 king Ratchis issued a curious law, responding to a threat that enemies of himself and his people posed, according to which officials at the points at which people entered his territory were to see to it that no-one left them without a seal or royal letter. When pilgrims on their way to Rome turned up, the official was to prepare a special pass that he would place on a wax tablet. He would place there his own seal, so that he could afterwards show it to the commissioners appointed by the king. These were then to prepare a letter for those going to Rome, and when they returned they were to receive another seal from the king's ring.⁶⁸ The procedure was complicated, testimony to organisational prowess of the Lombard state in its last years, and reflects unease at unauthorised intruders. Several years later, when Ratchis laid siege to Perugia, a key site on the road between Rome and Ravenna, Zacharias left Rome for a third time. He made his way to Perugia, where he persuaded the king to call off the siege. But shortly afterwards there was a stunning development, when Ratchis laid aside his royal dignity. He, his wife, and children went to S Peter's and adopted a monastic life, and the former king would end his days at S Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino. Some years earlier a man from Brescia, Petronax, had come to Rome and, with the encouragement of Gregory II, made his way with some other men to Monte Cassino, where he began to live near where the body of Benedict lay. Petronax went on to become the father of many monks living there in accordance with Benedict's *Rule*, and pope Zacharias later gave him books of the Bible and other things useful for a monastery, in particular a copy of Benedict's *Rule* written in his own handwriting. In a manoeuvre that was becoming familiar, he freed the monastery from the authority of the local bishop, placing it under the bishop of Rome alone.⁶⁹

The account of Zacharias in the *Liber Pontificalis* stops at this point, by implication one of triumph. The arrival of Ratchis in the monastery may have seemed a coup, although one might suspect that Ratchis's turning to religion was not voluntary, but forced upon him by his brother Aistulf, who succeeded him as king. It is from another source that we learn that Aistulf occupied Ravenna and brought about the end of the exarchate. Indeed, he went on to threaten Rome itself. The *Liber Pontificalis*, ever more ready to tell of victories

rather than defeats, passes over Aistulf's deeds in silence, and whereas scarcely anything is known of them, Zacharias cannot have rested easily.⁷⁰

Despite Charles Martel's turning down Gregory III's request for help, relations between Rome and the Franks continued to strengthen. Writing to Zacharias to congratulate him on becoming pope, Boniface stated that he was regarded as being the servant and legate of the apostolic see, and a council held by Carloman in April 742 mentions archbishop Boniface as being the envoy of S Peter. In about 747 Zacharias sent to Pippin, who had succeeded his father Charles as mayor of the palace, what would become the third item in the *Codex Carolinus*, a collection of 27 excerpts from canon law that dealt with a range of issues of church discipline and practice, all drawn from the collection Dionysius Exiguus had made.⁷¹ In the same year Pippin's older brother Carloman arrived in Rome with some of his important followers, bearing countless gifts. Presenting himself to St Peter, he was tonsured, and on Zacharias's orders adopted clerical garb. He took up residence in a monastery at Mt Soracte, the place where pope Silvester was believed to have hidden during a persecution in the reign of Constantine. Zacharias granted this monastery, which had recently been given a property by Gregory II, and three dependent ones to Carloman, but he was not happy there, and later made his way further south to the monastery St Benedict had founded at Monte Cassino, vowing to spend the rest of his life there. One might be inclined to place Carloman the same category as Ratchis in having lost a power struggle with his brother, and a later writer commented that he was not sure why Carloman had adopted monastic life, but it seemed to him that the man had been kindled by love of a contemplative life. Carloman had been on close terms with Boniface, and his decision to become a monk may have been in response to a genuine sense of vocation.⁷²

Zacharias founded a number of rural establishments referred to by a new word, *domuscultae*. Some, if not all of them, were on land that had been donated to the church, such as an estate five miles from Rome that one Theodore had inherited from his father and transferred to the ownership of S Peter, in the hope that his sins would be forgiven. Zacharias embellished it with buildings he constructed and, oddly enough, pictures, and enlarged it on every side, buying nearby holdings for a fair price. He must have been putting together an establishment of reasonable size, perhaps one similar to the manors of the middle ages, that would have been organised along different lines to the way the church's estates in Sicily had been in the time of Gregory I. Whereas the exact nature of the *domuscultae* is unclear, they may have constituted a response to two developments. The alienation of church estates to the south by Leo III was deeply felt, and it would have been reasonable for the church to have built up its holdings near Rome. Of the *domuscultae* founded by

Zacharias, two were near Gaeta, halfway between Rome and Naples, whereas the others were in the immediate vicinity of Rome, as were those set up by pope Hadrian a few decades later. That three monasteries set up by Gregory II and Gregory III are all specified as having been granted estates from which the monks could be sustained suggests that a different way of supporting them may have become necessary then. Moreover, accounts of the foundation of *domuscultae* by Zacharias and Hadrian mention in every case that they were to be held by the church in perpetuity. The same point was made concerning two estates, known from later records to have been large ones, that the emperor bestowed on the church at Ninfa and Norma, some 50 km southeast of Rome, which it was to possess forever. In this respect, the system may have been intended to replace a practice of church lands being leased to laypeople under what were known as contracts of emphyteusis, which were extremely generous to the party taking the lease, for the period of the lease was in practice perpetual. The system had arisen centuries earlier, when the state offered leases on such terms to encourage people to cultivate unused land. Being major landowners, large churches came to dispose of land through contracts of this nature, which Justinian tried to regulate in the middle of the sixth century. The Roman church was leasing estates on these terms by the end of the sixth century, which laypeople cannot be blamed for having sought, for estates so leased could pass beyond the control of the church. It would have been sensible to Zacharias to have attempted to move away from this practice.⁷³

Whereas Zacharias was not one of the great builder popes, he made significant improvements to existing buildings. Finding the Lateran palace in great want, he restored it so that it was almost like new, perhaps providing an indication that the Lateran was again being lived in after John VII's move to the Palatine. In front of the Lateran he built a dining room which he beautified with different kinds of marble, glass, metal, mosaic, and picture. He also decorated a chapel dedicated to S Silvester and its portico with icons. The chapel is known from the late seventh century, and the cult of Silvester, the pope believed to have baptised Constantine, had been becoming more prominent. In front of the offices at the Lateran he built a portico and tower, where he placed bronze doors and railings, adorning it with a figure of the Saviour before the doors. Such a figure, together with the icons placed in S Silvester's, showed that Zacharias, no less than his two predecessors, was opposed to the imperially sponsored iconoclasm then underway in Byzantium, and may have been given further point by the figure placed before the bronze doors, for Leo III was believed to have opened his campaign against the icons by destroying an icon of Christ above the Chalke, or bronze, Gate in Constantinople, that gave entrance to the imperial palace in Constantinople.

We cannot be certain that this took place, but it was believed in Rome that a bronze statue, rather than image, of Christ stood before the bronze gate into the palace, so even if it did not Zacharias's gesture would have been pointed. Together with what would have been an implied comparison between his home and the palace of the emperor, Zacharias's gestures were those of a confident man.⁷⁴

Zacharias also took his place among the scholarly popes who undertook translations, but whereas the men who seem to have become popes Pelagius I and John III had translated material concerning the saints from Greek into Latin, Zacharias mounted an operation in the opposite direction, translating the *Dialogues* Gregory I had written into Greek. The earliest manuscript we have of his translation was written in Rome in 800, and Zacharias may have envisaged as readership among the Greeks who were then in Italy. He made a crucial change to the text, taking care at one point where Gregory mentioned the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son to soften the teaching, perhaps because he wished to make Gregory's work more acceptable to Greek readers, or conceivably because he was uneasy about the doctrine of the Son proceeding from the Father himself. Late in the ninth century patriarch Photios of Constantinople falsely concluded, on the basis of the translation, that neither Gregory nor Zacharias had believed that the Spirit proceeded from the Son; no less mistakenly, his near contemporary, Gregory's biographer John the deacon, attributed the different wording in the Greek translation to the cunning perversity of the Greeks. Both were mistaken, but reflect a distance between the Christian East and West that had become wider since the time of Zacharias. The terminology Zacharias used to translate into Greek the Latin word for king Gregory had used for an Ostrogothic sovereign suggests that he retained a sense that the emperor was unlike other rulers. Yet by the middle of the eighth century his authority around Rome was negligible.⁷⁵

We have seen popes dealing with the mayors of the palace who had come to hold effective power among the Franks, yet despite power among the Franks being firmly in the hands of the family of Charles Martel, a Merovingian king remained on the throne. There is no sign of contact between popes and the last Merovingians. According to Frankish sources from a slightly later period, in 750, Pippin, the younger brother of the Carloman who had become a monk, wrote to Zacharias, asking whether the anomalous situation whereby the king had no power and the person who had power was not the king was appropriate. Zacharias having replied that it was not, and ordered that Pippin was to be made king, in the following year Pippin was elevated to royal power, together with his wife Bertrada, while the last Merovingian king, Childeric, was tonsured, a procedure that involved the loss of the flowing hair that had

been part of the identity of the Merovingian family, and placed in a monastery. This story makes Zacharias complicit in the overthrow of a dynasty that extended back to the fifth century. Doubts have been raised as to the reliability of the Frankish sources for these events, which are not mentioned in any Roman source, although an argument from their silence would not be a strong one. Perhaps the story was created in the years immediately following. But it is certain that in 753 Zacharias's successor Stephen, hard pressed by Lombards, left Rome on a journey for which there was no precedent in papal history, by travelling north of the Alps to seek the aid of Pippin against the Lombards, and that during the course of his trip he anointed Pippin and his two sons as kings of the Franks. The special relationship with the Empire that had lasted for so long was over.⁷⁶

The major reorientation that took place at the middle of the eighth century marks the end of the late antique period of the history of the Roman church, for its future would thereafter be bound up with a power based in northern Europe which regarded the Mediterranean as peripheral. But it would be wrong to end our narrative on this note, because the internal life of the church continued. We may conclude our study by returning to this, examining two aspects of it that seem to point in different directions.

Papal Liturgy

Whereas the practice of a pope distributing portions of the host he consecrated during mass among the titular churches did not outlast the seventh century, by then another custom had developed. The pope will usually have celebrated mass at the Lateran, his cathedral church, but on various days he travelled to other churches to officiate at what was referred to as a stational mass. Pope Hilary had provided special liturgical equipment made of gold and silver for use in churches where stations were observed, and ordered that they were to be kept in the cathedral and Sta Maria Maggiore. Sometimes the pope would ride directly to the church where the mass would take place; on other occasions he would be met by attendants at a fixed spot, from which the party would process to the church at which he would lead the worship. The practice seems to have developed gradually. We have seen Leo celebrate Christmas mass at S Peter's, and the homilies of Gregory were delivered in a number of churches, although there was no rigid pattern, for in one year he was in the church of Nereus and Achilleus on 12 May, and in another year the church of Pancras on the same day. But firm dates would emerge. We know that on Ash Wednesday

a gathering would take place at Sta Anastasia, from where it made its way to S Sabina; on the Greater Rogation of 25 April a gathering proceeded from S Laurence in Lucina to S Peter's, and on the feast of S Caesarius, 1 November, the gathering took place at SS Cosmas and Damian, from which it presumably made its way to the chapel of S Caesarius on the Palatine. When Sergius I introduced four feasts in honour of the Virgin, gatherings would take place at S Hadrian's in the forum and move to Sta Maria Maggiore. The distances involved in these processions were not long, and their number grew. But later they began at the Lateran, and the manner in which they were conducted, the reception of the pope at his destination, and the complex liturgy over which he then presided are known in detail.⁷⁷

We possess an account of what was involved when a pope celebrated mass at a stationary church on a festival day during the seventh century. All the acolytes from the third region and the defenders from all the seven regions came together at the Lateran, and as the pope rode to the appointed church they walked before him, while lay dignitaries walked on either side of his horse. Ahead of him rode the deacons, as always closely associated with the pope, the primicerius and two notaries, the defenders, and the sub-deacons of the various regions, at some distance from the pope. He was followed by another group of officials on horseback: the vicedominus, the keeper of his wardrobe, the nomenclator, and the sacellarius. An acolyte walked before the pope holding the holy chrism in his hand. Anyone on horseback who wished to approach the pope had to dismount and speak first with an official; another arrangement applied to people on foot. When the pope arrived at his destination, members of the higher clergy would be waiting for him, the bishops on the left and the priests on the right; this was so that when the pope sat down, presumably facing in the opposite direction, the bishops would be on his right and the priests to his left.

On his arrival at the church, the acolytes and defenders revered the pope, and the clergy and officials of the church, or diaconia, that he was visiting inclined their heads. Preparations for the liturgy took place, including a complicated vesting of the pope. When all was ready the pope stood up, gave his right hand to the archdeacon and his left to the next senior person, who both supported him as he entered the church, preceded by a subdeacon with incense and seven acolytes carrying candles, four of whom would pass to the right and three to the left at the end of the procession, allowing a gap to open through which the pope would walk before he bowed to the altar and crossed himself. The pope took little part in the first section of the liturgy, although his approval was needed for its various stages to proceed. It culminated in the solemn reading of the Gospel by a deacon, after he had kissed the pope's feet. Then preparations were made at the altar for the celebration of the sacrament.

The Sanctus was said by the subdeacons, but the canon of the mass was the responsibility of the pope alone, assisted by the arch-deacon who stood at his side. When it was completed the pope returned to his seat, and the archdeacon took over; he was the one who indicated when the Agnus Dei was to be sung. One of the deacons took the paten to where the pope sat, to give him communion. When the mass was completed seven people bearing candles and a thurifer again walked in front of the pope as he left the church.⁷⁸

The text we have been very briefly summarising was not composed to allow people to follow and participate in the liturgy as a modern prayer book or missal would, but to guide a master of ceremonies. The product of a society in which ritual, in secular as well as religious contexts, played a different function to that it does today, it can arouse unease among those who associate authenticity with spontaneity. Teams of participants arranged in hierarchical order played parts in its carefully orchestrated ceremonies, but at its summit one man stood alone. The passage of the pope through the streets of the city in such a spectacular fashion, on average more than once a week across the year, and his role in the solemn mass that followed demonstrated his immense dignity and authority to all the inhabitants of the city. Members of the laity could simply look on. When, early in the fifth century, Augustine nominated the priest Heraclius to succeed him as bishop of Hippo, the congregation cried out many times 'meet and right!', quoting words from the Eucharistic liturgy; but one suspects that such behaviour became less frequent. The status of the laity as onlookers rather than participants at a Eucharistic celebration presided over by a pope comports well with developments in the layout of the churches of Rome during the period, for zones which had their own significance were being established within churches. Whereas the area around the main altar became increasingly reserved for the clergy, laypeople could gravitate towards other areas that were becoming more commonly found; that is, the chapels dedicated to particular saints that had their own altars and the crypts that gave access to the bodies of the saints and were suitable for private prayer. Such developments, both of which were related to the cult of the martyrs, suggest directions in which lay piety was moving. But the chapels themselves facilitated the priestly function of saying mass, and there were some who carried out this function on an industrial scale. Doubtless there were few who could match the enthusiasm pope Leo III had for saying mass, which he was said to have done seven or nine times a day, but the task was becoming more central to the functions of the clergy, and was coming to be thought of in different terms. Gregory I saw the mass as a sacrifice capable of producing miraculous benefits for individuals, whether those who were given communion or those on whose behalf the sacrifice was offered. One has little sense of a community of believers gathering for the common purpose of

Non-Christian Rome

Yet many things remained unchanged in the life of the Roman church. At the beginning of the period we have examined, the earliest sermons of Leo I had been about Peter, and it has been wisely pointed out that Peter is beyond doubt the most important person in the *Codex Carolinus*, which commences just as our period was ending.⁸⁰ But ideology was not the only thing to stay firm. Among the good deeds of pope Zacharias was his provision of food for the needy and the pilgrims who dwelled near S Peter's, and by the end of the century pope Hadrian had founded three diaconiae nearby. But these popes were maintaining a tradition that was at least 400 years old. Two-thirds of the way through the fourth century it was known that needy people frequented the Vatican, and by its end Pammachius, a strong Christian, was supplying banquets to so many people inside S Peter's that they filled the basilica. Jerome had seen with his own eyes one of the most noble women of Rome making a display of herself in an effort to appear religious as, preceded by a group of effeminate males, she gave with her own hand a single coin to each poor person in S Peter's; when an old lady came back for a second, blood was shed. Pope Symmachus had built accommodation for needy people at S Peter's, as well as S Paul's and S Laurence's, and when Proba settled nearby she was generous in bestowing alms on the needy. Towards the end of the sixth century an official left money in his will for an institution that supported the needy near S Peter's. Whereas there is no evidence from the seventh century, this probably reflects the absence of the kinds of sources we have for earlier periods rather than a cessation of activity at the site. The activities of popes of the eighth century near S Peter's were in accordance with an ancient tradition of benefaction that slowly mutated into new forms.⁸¹

We have also frequently encountered people who made a point of visiting S Peter's before entering Rome. Such behaviour on the part of pilgrims or people who visited the city for religious reasons is easily understandable, but it was shared by people who came on secular affairs. When Sidonius Apollinaris came to Rome on political business in the fifth century he made a point of praying at the basilicas of the apostles before he entered the city. We have seen emperors acting in the same way since the early fifth century, and their example was followed by the Ostrogothic kings Theoderic and Totila, as well as the emperor Constans when he visited Rome. When Charlemagne arrived in

774 he first went to S Peter's on foot, and only after he had prayed and obtained the pope's permission did he enter Rome. But the practice was older than the people who engaged in it may have realised. They were enacting a ceremony familiar from pre-Christian times that required one to visit shrines and sanctuaries dedicated to the supreme deity before entering a large city.⁸²

Rome knew traditions that were older than Christianity. The life of the city had become increasingly contoured around its church and the bishop who presided over it, and the officers of the church proved remarkably adept at generating the sources we have for it; conversely, we strain to hear the voices of the bearers of oral traditions by which any non-Christian practices must have been passed on. Whereas the evidence we have for their existence is scattered and, as with that for the role of women in the church, has to be prised out of sources that were not inclined to give them favourable publicity, they continued to cause disquiet among the clergy. In a sermon delivered on Christmas Day 451, pope Leo complained of people who, when they reached the top of the steps leading into S Peter's, turned around and bowed towards the rising sun. Contrary to what would become the standard practice of 'orientating' churches, literally making them face the east, people who entered S Peter's were facing towards the west, so that reverencing the sun involved turning around. By the fourth century a cult of the Unconquered Sun was being celebrated in Rome on 25 December, and the day was also being recognised as that on which Christ had been born. This would have been particularly appropriate had he been conceived on 25 March, for people in the period took the symbolism of numbers seriously, and believed it was not accidental that the interval between these two dates was 246 days, a number that could be obtained by multiplying the highly symbolic number six by 46, the number of years it took to build the Temple, which stood for Christ's body. Whereas it is not clear whether the Unconquered Sun began to be celebrated before or after the birth of Christ came to be observed on the same day, Leo was clearly concerned at the possibility of an overlap between Christian and non-Christian observances. A few decades later pope Gelasius condemned, perhaps to no avail, the observance of the ancient rites of the Lupercalia, whereas during a difficult period in the Gothic war some inhabitants of Rome made their way to the Forum and attempted to open the doors of the temple of Janus, in accordance with an old tradition that its doors were to be left open in times of warfare. It is curious that whereas the copious correspondence of Gregory I mentions non-Christians elsewhere in Italy it has nothing to say about any such in Rome, but it would be wrong to conclude from this that by his time the non-Christian element of the population was confined to backwoods areas, for the surviving letters of Gregory are often disappointingly silent about conditions within Rome.⁸³

There is no doubt that pre-Christian practices persisted in Rome. The most striking evidence is a colourful letter that Boniface wrote to pope Zacharias in 743, in which he mentioned how scandalised he had been when uneducated Germanic people came back from Rome with tales of having seen people there engaging in the kind of practices which he had forbidden to his converts. They reported that every year on the calends of January, near S Peter's, a chorus whose members acted as though they were pagans made its way through the public places, crying out in accordance with heathen rite and uttering sacrilegious songs. By day and night tables groaned beneath the weight of the banquets that were set upon them, and no-one was prepared to give a neighbour fire, an iron implement, or anything useful from his house. The northern visitors reported that they had seen women with amulets and bands tied around their arms and legs in accordance with pagan custom, offering themselves in public for sale. Not unreasonably, Boniface's informants, whom he stressed were earthly minded and foolish people, argued that it was unfair of him to prohibit them to engage in practices they had witnessed in Rome itself. His reaction may be imagined. Boniface informed the pope that such behaviour was an obstacle to his preaching, and after quoting Paul and Augustine Boniface counselled him to forbid such activities in Rome, encouraging him with the thought that he would thereby both gain a reward for himself and help Boniface's endeavours.⁸⁴

Zacharias's reply was unmistakably defensive. He agreed that such things were detestable and pernicious, and informed Boniface that from the day he had entered office he had chopped them off, in accordance with what Gregory, his predecessor who had brought him up, had decreed. Boniface's criticism may have touched a sore nerve, for the issues he raised were among the matters that were dealt with by a council over which Zacharias presided later in the year. The first canons of the council were concerned with the clergy: Bishops were forbidden to live with women, priests and deacons to consort with women in a covert fashion, and bishops, priests, and deacons were not to wear the clothes worn by secular people. But tucked away among its 15 canons was one concerning people who celebrated the calends of January or the winter solstice with pagan rites. The council decreed that anyone who dared to celebrate these by preparing tables for banqueting in their homes, or went about the streets and public places singing incantations or dancing in a sacrilegious fashion, behaviour that was a great evil in the sight of God, would be anathema. Surprising as it may seem, some of the activities that horrified Boniface were the same as those with which the calends had been celebrated in Rome during the republican period, although it is impossible to trace the lines by which they were passed on, presumably orally and within families. And, whereas the evidence we have is episodic, it is clear that the coming of

the New Year continued to be celebrated boisterously on the calends of January in Christian times. Preachers in the large cities of Antioch and Milan decried it late in the fourth century, as did a slightly later bishop of Ravenna, perhaps at the time Galla Placidia lived in the city, and at the end of the seventh century the council in Trullo had legislated against the observance of calends and other days from the old calendar. It mentioned such practices as dancing by women, and men and women consorting together, along with practices not mentioned by Boniface, such as cross-dressing and the wearing of masks. Such observances were not merely confined to laypeople, who were to be excommunicated if they acted in this fashion, but members of the clergy, who would be deposed from office.⁸⁵ These practices occurred not in out-of-the-way communities of rustics where one might have expected pre-Christian practices to have lingered, but in large cities, and there is no reason to doubt that Rome would have been among them.⁸⁶

There was a kind of ambiguity in such celebrations, for it is possible that they fell into a kind of grey zone within which practices could be enjoyed in a spirit of carnival that did not entail religious conviction that was opposed to Christianity. This was the view of Gregory I, who, with typical broad-mindedness, recommended that animals the English had formerly slaughtered as sacrifices now be barbecued, in the conviction that whereas some external joys were maintained, the people would more easily agree to joys of an interior kind. But perhaps he was optimistic, and the converts felt that the new observances did not cancel their previous convictions but added to them. The issue had reared its head in Rome itself. A law enacted in 399 that abolished what it described as profane rites nevertheless permitted festive meetings of citizens, the communal happiness of all, pleasures according to old custom, and public banqueting. Would it have been possible for such festivities to be detached from the beliefs with which they had previously been associated? Presumably the people who revered the sun before entering S Peter's on Christmas Day saw themselves as Christians. It is highly unlikely that they saw themselves as 'pagans', a catch-all term Christian authors used to describe groups of people who had little in common beyond engaging in practices they disapproved of. But whereas we cannot tell with what measure of religious conviction people engaged in them, it is clear that the clergy saw the maintenance of such observances and festivities as a defeat.⁸⁷

One may be inclined to write such phenomena off as the enthusiasms of ill-educated and marginal people. Yet towards the end of the seventh century, no less a person than an archdeacon was accused of having been involved in murky activities. The accession of pope Sergius had been difficult, for his rival for the office, the archdeacon Paschal, was a bad loser, who, even after Sergius had been publicly accepted, attempted to bribe the exarch to intervene on his

behalf. Before long, Paschal was accused of having engaged in magical songs, frequenting little groves, and what was referred to as the casting of lots. He was relegated to a monastery where, having failed to repent, he died five years later.⁸⁸ The activities Paschal was accused of having engaged in were ones with long histories. The magical songs would have been spells, such as those used by magicians in attempts to heal sick people. Groves were traditionally numinous sites in antiquity, about which Christians felt uneasy; they had been frequented by evil kings of Old Testament times, and Gregory I knew of one where he believed that demons were worshipped. The casting of lots probably refers to a practice common in late antiquity of people opening at random a secular book or the Bible and taking the first passage one's eyes lighted upon as being applicable to one's situation.⁸⁹ But Paschal was not the only important person to be accused of involvement in such activities. Gelasius had had to deal with a deacon accused of being involved in the damnable art of execrable magic, and shortly afterwards two senators, Basilius and Praetextatus, were accused of polluting themselves, having been contaminated by involvement with a sinister art over a long period. The suspects managed to escape from the prison where they were being held, and Basilius, dressed as a monk, entered a monastery. Before long, having had a bad effect on a nun in a nearby convent, he was thrown out of the monastery, and later burned in Rome. It was a grisly end for a senior person. Basilius shared his name with the praetorian prefect who had become involved on behalf of king Odovacer in the election of pope Felix III in 483, and may have been his son. The case of Paschal was anticipated more closely during the 520s, when the philosopher Boethius was accused of having stained himself with sacrilege in his pursuit of high office by seeking to obtain assistance from spirits of the filthiest kind.⁹⁰ The charge was levelled during the twilight of the reign of king Theoderic, a time of political tension when it would have been a potent weapon in the hands of a rival group at the court. Perhaps the same was true of Paschal, for one cannot help but suspect that Sergius and his supporters would have been pleased to see the end of the ambitious archdeacon. But Rome had been Christian for a long time by then.

Paschal, an archdeacon, would have stood beside the pope as he presided over the solemnities of a stational mass. It is customary to see the church of Rome at the mid-point of the eighth century as having reached a point at which great triumphs lay ahead, and indeed they did. But the people boisterously celebrating the New Year, no less than the figure of Paschal, show that, centuries after Gelasius had tried to deal with those who celebrated the Lupercalia, people in the city continued to engage in practices that were felt to be antithetical to Christianity. Whereas the city and its church had undergone massive change in the three centuries we have been considering in this book, here is a final sign of continuity, and a hint that the work of the church would

never be finished.

Notes

- 1 They are described in *LP*, 87.1f.
- 2 Mansi, 11: 239.
- 3 Gregory I, ep. 2.49; Paul the deacon, *hist. lang.*, 1.1.
- 4 Late sixth century: Gregory, ep. 2.28. Wilfrid: Eddius, *V Wilf* 28, 33 (*MGH SRM* 6: 222, 227). Cottian Alps: *LP*, 88.3. Codex argenteus: <http://www.ub.uu.se/en/Collections/Manuscript-Collections/Silver-Bible/Codex-Argenteus-Online/> Wilfrid: *V Wilf* 17 (*MGH SRM* 6: 212f). Evangelist: *MGH Ep* 3: 286. Gregory II: *LP*, 91.4; cf Paul the deacon, *hist lang.*, 4.45. Liutprand: *MGH Leges* 4: 109 no. 6.
- 5 Liutprand: *LP*, 91.4. Farfa: Jaffe and Wattenbach (1895), no. 2144. Liutprand: *MGH Leges* 4: 109 no. 6; 124 c 33. Lombards as *gens*: *LP*, 63.3, 64.1, 67.1, 87.2, 88.3. 'Goths' are first mentioned at 59.2, and frequently in the accounts of Silverius and Vigilius.
- 6 Epitaphs: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 386 n. 1. In the time of Gregory I a subdeacon had been rector of the Appian patrimony: John the deacon, *V Greg.*, 2.53.
- 7 *LP*, 88.2, with Nordhagen (1967; 1968). Gregory I: John the deacon, *V Greg.*, 4.84. Compliance with the council in Trullo: Ó Carragáin (2005): 255–57. Important work is underway in this area.
- 8 *LP*, 88.1, with Mackie (2003): 79f. Icon: Nees (2002): 144. Unworthy: above, p. 95, n. 75. Greek lettering: Cavallo (1988), esp. 484–87. Inscription: Levison (1910): 363f. Coins: Breckenridge (1959); note, however, that none of these coins was minted in Italy. Epitaph: Levison (1910): 363. Mary's εὐσπλαγχνία: Gambero (1999): 79 (*Sub Tuum Praesidium*). Lead seals: Cotsonis (2005), esp. 403. Wall paintings: Osborne (1981).
- 9 John: *LP*, 88.2. Theoderic: *anon val* 67 (*MGH AA* 9: 324). Felix: *LP*, 56.2. Elephants: Cassiodorus, *var.*, 10.30. Narses: *exc sang* 714 (*MGH AA* 9: 336). Martin: Neil, p. 178f. Phocas: Gregory I, ep. 13.1. Sergius: *LP*, 86.2. On the Palatine, Augenti (1996): 46–50. Liverani (2003) places great weight on palaces being imperial residences.
- 10 Heraclius: Nicephorus, *brev.*, 16. On Justinian, Head (1972).
- 11 *LP*, 88.5 (dealing with Justinian), 88.2 (pictures).
- 12 Attends council: *LP*, 81.3. Letter of Leo: *PL*, 96: 409; perhaps Constantine was the apocrisiarius the emperor Constantine had hoped to see (*PL* 69: 393).
- 13 *LP*, 90.2, 9; *LPR*, 137–45, the latter written to counter the former.
- 14 *LP*, 90.3–7. Imperial rescripts had long been called *sacra* (*LP*, 54.4 and, in one version, 47.4. The noun is neuter, but at 88.5 is understood as feminine.) Saddle cloths (*mappulae*): Gregory I, ep. 3.54, 66. For the palace, cf *LP*, 76.2, 81.4. *C amelaucum*: de Waha (1982). Mosaic: Cormack (2000a): 122. Todt (2002) is an exemplary study.
- 15 Earlier miracles: Gregory, *dial.*, 3.2.3, 3.1f.
- 16 Hadrian: *PL* 96: 1235f.

- 17 Demon: *Miraculum Anastasii*, p. 237. Events in Rome: *LP*, 90.8, 10f. Later author: Bede, *de rat temp*, 66 (CCSL 123A: 532). Picture, Hack (2003): 157–59. Marcian: *MGH AA* 9: 490. New emperor: *LP*, 90.11. Dukes are discussed by Bavant (1979).
- 18 Office holders: *LP*, 90.3. First among the defenders: above, p. 152. Sacellarius: *LP*, 91.1. Arcarius: (Pelagius I, ep. 83). Nomenclators: *LP*, 81.17; *MGH Ep* 3: 316, 319, 320. More detail in Richards (1979): 295–302; Noble (1984): 218–30. I translate *scriniarius* as secretary, and *notarius* as notary.
- 19 Law: *cod theod*, 6.10.2. Defenders: above, p. 152. Narses: *PLRE* 3: 912f. Nomenclators: *cod iust*, 1.27.22ff. Scriniarii: Cassiodorus, *var*, 11. 22, 24. In general, Jones (1964): 572–601.
- 20 Dionysius's work: *PL* 67: 19–23, 453–520. Dionysius approached: *PL* 67: 513–20. Report to John: ed. Krusch, in Paul Kehr *Festchr*, 1926.
- 21 Law of 381: c *od theod*, 6.10.2f. Theodotus: Osborne (2003): 232–34. Theodore: *LP*, 97.1, discussed by Davis (trans., p. 123 n. 3) and Bavant (1979): 76f. Gregory: *LP*, 91.1.
- 22 Leo: *Liber Censuum*, p. 351 no. 40; similar grants follow. Eugenius: *CIL* 6: 8401. Council: Liutprand, *hist ott*, 9 (ed. Becker, p. 165f).
- 23 Boniface: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 282 n. 8. Julius: *LP*, 36.3. Gordianus: Pietri and Pietri (1999f): 934; I take the references to be to the same individual.
- 24 Libraries of Rome: Gregory I, ep. 8.28. Gallipoli: Gregory I, ep. 9.206, although it is possible that the privileges to which Gregory refers were standard. Account book: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 2.24; Gregory, ep. 2.50. With Leo's ep. 28.3 compare *tract*. 21.2. Copies of Gregory I's homilies were kept in the church's archive (CCSL 141: 2). Gelasius: *LP*, ed. Duchesne, p. 255, variants 1. 17 (the clumsy Latin appropriately blurs the distinction between library and archive.) Argument *ex codicibus et ex antiquis polypticsis scrinii*: *MGH Ep* 2: 446.32.
- 25 *LPR*, 60. Gregory II: *MGH Ep* 3: 2676, with footnote. Gelasius: ep. 15.1 (ed. Thiel, p. 380). Encomium: with *LP* 92.1, cf *LP*, 82.1 and Gennadius, *scr eccl*, 69 (Hilary of Arles), 80 (the priest Vincent; *PL* 58: 1099, 1104).
- 26 Vigilius: *PL*, 69: 53. 537: *nov*. 47; cf 50 for its adoption. It is strange to find early legislation of both Justin II and Tiberius being dated according to the regnal and indictional years (*nov*. 140, 161, 163).
- 27 *LP*, 82.1 (Leo); 83.1 (Benedict), with ed. Mommsen, p. 141 for John. Willibald: *V Bon*, p. 21.10–12. Gregory II: *LP*, 91.1. Vigilius had referred to *Iohannes senior*: *coll avel*, p. 439.24.
- 28 Symmachus: Gregory, *dial*, 4.31. Paschasius: *ibid*, 4.42. Pontiff: *ibid*, 1.4.11–17.
- 29 *MGH Ep* 3: 156.17, 170.10; note as well *trans euriporum rheuma*, 174.36f.
- 30 Photios, *bibl*, 252. Images: Angenendt (2001). Anastasius: CCSL 175: 316. Icon of Mary: CCSL 175: 321. List: *MGH AA* 13: 424f. Greek nuns: Coates-Stephens (1997): 195–98. Head of George: *LP*, 93.24.
- 31 Agatho: *PL* 87: 1224f.
- 32 Canons: Dekkers (1995): 576f. Council in Trullo: Alberigo et al., ed., p. 230. Letter of bishops: *Council of Chalcedon* 3: 120–28, signats. 46f. Council of Carthage: CCSL 149: 266.476. Council in Trullo: c 3. Time of Charlemagne: Florus of Lyons, *MGH Poet* 2: 544, 13, 16–18.
- 33 Demon: *Miraculum sancti Anastasii*, p. 237; cf *LP*, 91.11. Hadrian: *MGH Ep* 3: 643.
- 34 CCSL 118A: 201.

- 35 Early career: *LP*, 91, 1, with 91. 10 (old home) and 91.6 (Tiber).
- 36 Floods: *LP*, 91.6, with 79.5 (rain), 90.1 (hunger), and above p. 115f on Gregory I. Walls: *LP*, 91.2 (with 89 for Sisinnius); cf *cod theod.* 14.6.3 for earlier times. Gregory III: *LP*, 92.15; for the significance of *de proprio*, cf 53.10. Honorius: *LP*, 72.5. Monogram: Morrisson and Barrandon (1988).
- 37 Gregory: ep.11.17. Book: *Ordines Romani* 1: 75.13. Popes: *LP*, 83.5, 84.5, 85.5. S Eustachius: *Liber Censuum*, pp. 352 (no. 57), 353 (no. 63); cf on Zacharias, p. 353f, and further *LP*, 97.81. Gregory III: *LP* 397, 92.12f. Leo III: *LP*, 98. 70, 75, 81. Invention: Simonnot (2005): 168ff. Durliat (1990) is overly subtle.
- 38 *LP*, 91.7 (Cumae), 21 (Sutri); 92.15 (Gallese; *In compage sanctae reipublicae*). Plan: Ullmann (1972): 73. Noble (1984) is a classic treatment.
- 39 *LP*, 91.14–16.
- 40 Iconoclasm and its aftermath: *LP*, 91. 17–20, with 24 on Constantinople; *LPR*, 153 preserves traditions of tensions within Ravenna. I do not use two letters purportedly written by Gregory to Leo. Their authenticity has been much discussed: Gouillard (1968): 259–77 (with an edition); Grotz (1980); Conte (1984): 46–62; Hack (2003): 159–64. Alexakis uses them (1996): 108–10; the question remains open.
- 41 *MGH Leges* 4: 109 (of 717).
- 42 *LP*, 91. 22f. I gratefully follow Davis’s translation of the items Liutprand left behind. Lombard dukes: Paul the deacon, *hist lang.* 6.49, 55–8. Duke of Venetia: *MGH Ep* 3: 701.
- 43 *LP*, 91.4; *MGH Leges in folio*, 3: 451ff.
- 44 Bishop of Friuli: *MGH SRLI* 395; *MGH Ep* 3: 699f. Peter of Pola: *MGH Ep* 3: 700f.
- 45 Biographical details from Willibald, *Vita*. Recent discussions include Felten et al. (2007); Clay (2010).
- 46 I have used the Patrologia Latina Database: <http://pld.chadwyck.com/>.
- 47 Willibald, *V Bonifatii* 6 (pp. 27–9), with p. 29 n.1 on the year in which these events took place, and n. 2 on earlier occurrences of his being styled Boniface. Oath: *MGH Ep* 3: 265; cf *Liber Diurnus*, p. 136f.
- 48 I therefore disagree with Clay (2010): 238–41.
- 49 *MGH Ep* 3: 394; cf e.g. 363.
- 50 Bede: *HE*, 1.27 qu. 4 (ed. Plummer, pp. 50–2). Boniface’s actions are best approached through Ubl (2008).
- 51 Gregory: ep. 1.41. Vigilius seems to have recommended threefold immersion to a Spanish bishop: *PL* 69: 19. Alcuin: ep. 137 (*MGH Ep* 4:212–15); Alcuin also deals with the issue at ep. 134 (202), = 137 (214); 139 (221).
- 52 *MGH Ep* 3: 336, with *MGH Ep* 3: 258 on Gregory II’s instructions. Aquinas considers the problem at *Summa Theologica* 3.7 ad 3. Funny story: *MGH AA* 11:193. Vigilius: *PL* 69: 17; other variants occur at 19. Pelagius I: ep. 21. Nicholas I: *MGH Ep* 6: 599 (cap. 104). Frankish clergy: *MGH Ep* 3: 301. Zacharias: *MGH Ep* 3: 315.
- 53 *MGH Ep* 3: 278f (Gregory III), 299–302 (Zacharias) with Willibald, *V Bon*, 7 (p. 36) on the visit to Rome.
- 54 Auxerre: *Gestes des évêques*, p. 116. The synod of Hertford presided over by Theodore of

- Canterbury in 672, having considered the desirability of synods meeting twice a year, decided that a synod would be held every year at Clofesho on 1 August (Bede, *HE*, 4.5, can. 7).
- 55 *LP*, 91.25.
- 56 *LP*, 92.2–4. Letter of invitation: *MGH Ep* 3: 703. *LPR* fails to mention John's attendance at the synod.
- 57 In 767 another bishop of Porto would be among those who ordained an antipope: *LP*, 96.4.
- 58 Mordek (1988), whose excellent discussion is followed by an edition of the versions of the proceedings (147–54); *LP*, 92.6f; on the chapel, Mackie (2003): 78. Synod of 745: *MGH Ep* 3: 316. I take the dedication of the church from Mordek, p. 149.60–66. Monks and secular clergy: *LP*, trans. Davis, vol i, p. xxvii. John the singer: Bede, *HE*, 4.18. Reccesuinth: Moorhead (2013): 170. Clovis: *LP*, ed. Mommsen p. 130.21, following the reading of F. Date: Mordek, p. 147.2–4.
- 59 *LP*, 92.5, with 24.16 (Constantine), 48.3 (Hilary), 91.19 (Gregory II).
- 60 Leo's actions: Theophanes, 6224. Hagiography: Patlagean (1964). Patrimonies: Marazzi (1991; not entirely convincing); Pringent (2004); Scholz (2012).
- 61 *LP*, 92.14, with Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 4.22. Coins: Grierson and Blackburn (1986): plate 47 no. 1030 with note p. 637f; note as well the coin-like objects issued by Gregory and his successor Zacharias: *ibid.* pp. 262f, 644f. Vigilius: *MGH Ep* 3: 68. Pelagius: above, p. 121f.
- 62 Legates: *LP*, 92.14; cont fred 22. The language of the latter is problematic, and Classen takes the phrase *romano consulto* to mean protection for Rome: (1981): 945–48. Letter: *MGH Ep* 3: 476f; on the terms used for Charles's office, Hack (2006f): 116–118. People in Rome later credited Gregory II with beginning the correspondence (*LP*, 94.15).
- 63 *MGH Ep* 3: 477–79; on the date, Noble (1984): 45 n. 151. Popes Stephen II and Paul I would conjure king Pippin: *MGH Ep* 3: 489.39f, 516.22f. Sixth century: Eugippius, *V Sev*, 16.5. Young man: *Miraculum sancti Anastasii*, 236. Poitiers: Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 6.54.
- 64 *LP*, 92.5–13, with 96.1 on Stephen. Building program: Coates-Stephens (1997): 204; use of higher-quality building materials accounts for more works surviving from the later period (223f).
- 65 Athenian: Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *admin imp*, p. 114.15; similarly, we need not take Cassiosorus's assertion that Boethius had entered the schools of the Athenians literally (*var*, 1.45.3). Representation: *LP*, 93.18. Translation: Bartelink (1981): 9f. Library: *LP*, 93.19.
- 66 *LP*, 93. 2–11.
- 67 *LP*, 93. 12–17. For Palm Sunday, compare the first words addressed to Zacharias, *Bene venit*, with the *Benedictus qui venit* of Palm Sunday (Mark 11: 9).
- 68 Ratchis, *lex*, 13 (*MGH Leg* 4: 192f).
- 69 Ratchis: *LP*, 93.23; *MGH SRLI*, 199, 487. Petronax: *MGH SS* 7: 582, with Conte (1984): 213; Paul the deacon, *hist lang*, 6.40; the manuscript would be destroyed by fire in 896.
- 70 *SRLI*, 199; *LP*, 94.5 vaguely alludes to troubles.
- 71 *MGH Ep* 3: 300.16f, 310.15f, 479–88.
- 72 *LP*, 93.21, taking 'clericatus iugum' to mean 'monastic status'; *Annales Regni Francorum*: s.a. 746 (*MGH Sc in us scol* p. 37f); Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni*, 2 (*MGH SRG in us schol* 25),

- discussed by Krüger (1973). Zacharias's grant is known from a letter to Pippin, transferring the properties to him: *Codex Carolinus* 23 (*MGH Ep* 3: 526f). Gregory II: *Liber Censuum*, p. 352 no. 51. Krüger (1973) discusses Einhard's almost pointedly vagueness as to Carloman's motivation.
- 73 *LP*, 93. 25f, with 97.54f on Hadrian and 93.20 on Ninfa and Norma, with ed. Duchesne, p. 438 n. 45. Among discussions, see Davis, 3: 31–4; Marazzi (1998): 240–50; Noble (1984): 245–48. Three monasteries: *LP*, 91.10, 92.9f. On emphyteusis, Justinian, *nov*, 120; Gregory I, ep. 1.70 (in particular, 3.3, 9.125).
- 74 *LP*, 93.18. Chapel: *LP*, 86.2, but see further ed. Duchesne, p. 334 n. 11. Chalke Gate: Theophanes, 6218, with Osborne (2003): 228. Believed in Rome: John the deacon, *V Greg*, 4.18.
- 75 *LP*, 93.29, with Rigotti (2005); 278f on *dial.* 2.38.4. Photios: *De sancti spiritus mystagogia* 84 (*PG* 102: 386f). John: *V Greg* 4.65 (*PL* 75: 225). It is curious that Photios knew material John used in his *Life*: cf. Photios, *bibl*, 252 with *V Greg* 2.23 (*PL* 75: 96). On Totila as $\rho\eta\chi$ rather than $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$, Bartelink (1981): 13 n. 12. I regret not having been able to consult the recent edition of Rigotti (2001).
- 76 Pippin's request: *cont fred*, 33; *Annales Regni Francorum*, 749; cf. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 1 (misnaming the pope). Doubts: McKitterick (2000); more recently Becher and Jarnut (2004). Stephen's journey: *LP*, 94.15, 18ff (a very full account). Hauck (1967): 74 interestingly compares the coming to power of the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties.
- 77 Baldovin (1987): 105–66; Willis (1994): 70–7. Hilary: *LP*, 48.11. Sergius: *LP*, 86.14.
- 78 *Ord Rom* 1 (ed. Andrieu, 1: 67–108).
- 79 Frequency: Chavasse (1993): 258. Augustine: *PL* 33: 967f. Layout: Bauer (1999), excellent and thought provoking. Leo III: Walafrid Stabo, *de exord et incr*, 20 (*PL* 114: 943). Gregory I: *dial*, 2.24.1f. 3.3.1f, 4.59f.
- 80 Hack (2006f): 907.
- 81 Zacharias: *LP*, 93.27. Hadrian: *LP*, 97.66. Needy people: Ammianus Marcellinus, 27.3.6. Pammachius: Paulinus, ep. 13.11–14. Jerome: ep. 22.32. Syrmachus: *LP*, 53.10. Procopius, *Secret History*, 26.29. Proba: Gregory I, *dial*, 4.14.3. Money left: Gregory, ep. 9.93, 130. Pope Hadrian, on the other hand, feed the needy at the Lateran (*LP* 97.54, a fascinating account).
- 82 Sidonius: ep. 1.5.9. Charlemagne: *LP*, 97.37–39. Pre-Christian: Pacatus, *pan*, 21, with Nixon's important n. 62.
- 83 Leo: *tract.* 27.4; more generally, 22.6 (*CCSL* 138: 135, 99), with Wallraff (2001): 77, 188. 246 days: Augustine, *de trin*, 4.5.9 (*CCSL* 50: 172f, John 2: 20f clarifies matters.) Gelasius: above, p. 41f. Temple: Procopius, *Wars*, 5.25.18–25 (note too consultation of the Sibylline oracles, *ibid* 5.24.28–37, 5.25 18–25.) The evidence of Gregory I is summarised by Markus (1997): 80–2. Gregory I refers to *rustici* in Sardinia (ep. 4.26, cf. 5.38; *rustici* worshipped Apollo at an out-of-the-way place: *dial*, 2.8.10) and a group living there with the uninviting name Barbaracini (ep. 4.25, 27) as being *pagani*, together with slaves owned by Jews (ep. 6.30, 9.104) and some of those ruled over by queen Brunhild (ep. 11.49). *Gentiles* were to be found among the Lombard and Romans populations in Narnia (ep. 2.4) and, apparently, Lombards in Luni (ep. 9.102); elsewhere Gregory regards a Vandal and some Lombards as *gentiles*: *dial*. 3.1.3; see too 3.37.2.
- 84 The relevant portion of the letter is in *MGH Ep* 3: 301; from a slightly earlier period, note

Gregory III, ed. Tangl, ep.51, with Conte (1984): 198–200.

- 85 Reply to Boniface: *MGH Ep* 3: 304f. Council in Rome: can. 9, *MGH Conc* 2/1: 15f. Fourth century: John Chrysostom: *PG* 48: 953–62 (Antioch); Ambrose, *interpel.* 4.1.5 (*SAEMO* 4: 228; Milan). Ravenna: Peter Chrysologus, *serm* 155 (*PL* 52: 509–511). Council in Trullo: can. 62, ed. Alberigo et al., p. 270f; the survival of other pre-Christian practices troubled the bishops at this council. See in general on the Calends Meslin (1970), e.g. pp. 12 (women dancing and singing), 71 (tables laden with food).
- 86 A biographer of Boniface writes of abuses occurring *sub quodam christianitatis nomine* (*V Bonifatii* 6, p. 26).
- 87 Gregory: in Bede, *HE*, 1.30. Law: *cod. theod.* 16.10.17, permitting *festos conventus civium, communem omnium laetitiam, voluptates secundum veterem consuetudinem, publica vota*.
- 88 *LP*, 86.5.
- 89 *Incantationes*: Augustine, *civ dei*, 10.8f, 21.6 (*CCSL* 47: 280f, 768); Gregory, *dial*, 1.10.4. Groves: Gregory, *dial*, 2.8.10. Lots: Augustine, *conf*, 4.3.5.
- 90 Gelasius: frag. 16 (ed. Thiel, p. 492). Basilios and Praetextatus: Cassiodorus, *var*, 4.22f; Gregory, *dial*, 1.4.1–7. Boethius: *cons phil*, 1.4.37, 39.

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